

THE A-Z OF

SPECIAL **SFX** EDITION

# ZOMBIES

# 32

ZOMBIE MOVIES  
RATED AND SLATED

## WORLD WAR Z

Creator Max Brooks  
speaks!



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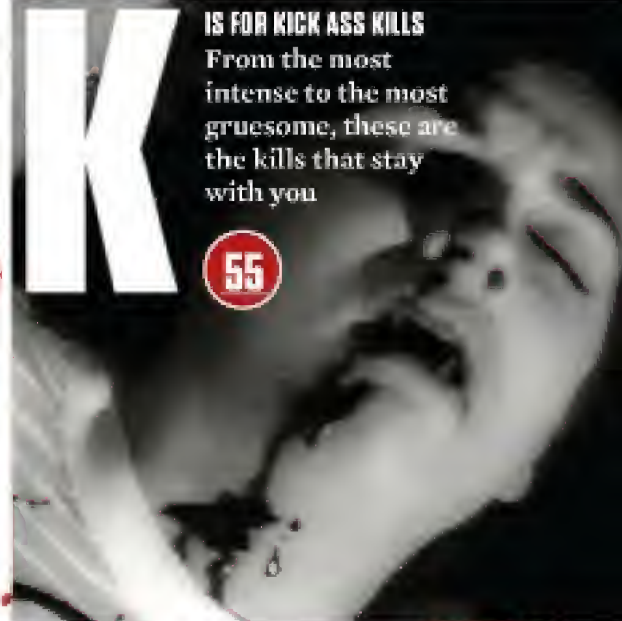


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# APOCALYPSE

Will Salmon wonders why we're all so fascinated by the end of the world...





**T**hink of the word “zombie” and another word naturally follows it: “apocalypse”. The two have gone shambling hand-in-hand ever since George Romero’s epochal *Night Of The Living Dead* set the template for everything from *28 Days Later* to *The Walking Dead*. It all started in 1968 with that black and white big bang.

But what’s the appeal of end-of-the-world stories? Why are we so fixated with the death of civilisation? And why are zombies – often seen, at least until relatively recently, as almost comical villains – the perfect way to explore these themes?

## START AT THE VERY BEGINNING

Of course, *Night Of The Living Dead* was far from the first apocalyptic story. We’ve been telling tales about the end of civilisation since, well, its beginning. Every culture has its own ideas about how things could end, and the world’s religions have never been shy of putting forward prophecies about the end of days. The Bible has been much-quoted by horror films (and hey, it does mention the dead coming back to life...), but it’s far from alone. Norse mythology predicted Ragnarök – a grand-slam battle-royale between the gods. Hinduism predicts an all-consuming flood, while Zoroastrianism reckons it’ll be a great fire that does us all in.

However, it’s not until 1826 and the publication of Mary Shelley’s post-*Frankenstein* novel *The Last Man* that we see the beginnings of the post-apocalyptic story as we know it now. Set in the twentieth century, it focuses on a handful of survivors following a devastating plague. Shelley claimed in her introduction that the idea was inspired by prophetic writings discovered in Naples. It’s a gloomy text (no doubt partially inspired by the death of Shelley’s husband Percy a few years previously), and ends with the group wiped out leaving one last man. Watch the spoilers in your title, Mary.

Nearly 60 years later, in 1885, Richard Jefferies’ *After London* is set in a depopulated future England, where the survivors have reverted to a pseudo-medieval way of life; a “relapse into barbarism” as he puts it. But it’s not until the tumultuous twentieth century, following the two world wars, that the genre really blossomed.

The dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945, and the subsequent bombing of Nagasaki three days later, had an understandably dramatic effect on the public imagination, as did the Cold War that followed in the decades after World War 2. Suddenly, we lived in a world that feasibly *could* end, and not because of any fickle gods, but by our own hands. The examples of apocalyptic books and films that followed are too numerous to mention, but a few important ones are John Wyndham’s *The Day Of The Triffids* (often written off as “cosy” but actually surprisingly brutal, and a big influence on zombie fiction); Walter Miller Jr’s *A Canticle For Leibowitz* from 1960, which postulates a future where disaster has caused humanity to forget most of the lessons it has learned, trapping us in a cycle of repeating past mistakes; and the *Terminator* films, with *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* in particular hammering home just how bad a nuclear war would be. And if you think those are grim, wait until you explore further in the genre with John Christopher’s ultra-harrowing novel, *The Death Of Grass*, or 1984 BBC drama *Threads*, which sees

the population of the UK reduced to gangs fighting in the ruins, while their children are born sick and deformed. It’s cheerful stuff.

## ARE YOU READY?

So why do we have such a fascination with the end of civilisation in the first place? Horror author Simon Clark (no newbie to the apocalypse, having destroyed humanity several times in his books), believes that it’s “hard-wired” into us as a way of preparing for disaster. “Our senses scan for danger to us, personally, or for a calamity to befall society. When we read an apocalyptic story, or watch a disaster film, are we subconsciously preparing ourselves for the real thing? After all,

if supermarkets run out of food today, the end of civilisation is surely only a week away!”

Dr Arnold T Blumberg, the author of *Zombieman*, who also leads the “Zombies in Popular Media” course at the University of Baltimore, says that interest in these stories always “intensifies during times of war and financial hardship,” and that they help us work through our natural concerns. “People always have a morbid fascination with the end of the world, which may happen beyond their own death, where our civilisation is heading and if its fate is ultimately a bad one. We watch the crumbling of buildings in action movies and zombies in horror films because we not only need that escape valve to deal with real

**“People always have a morbid fascination with the end of the world, what may happen beyond death and where our civilisation is heading”**



“Sure, let’s head through these dark woods. That’s bound to be a good idea.”



“And this is my boyfriend. Before you killed him.”



fear through fiction, but because there's a part of us that wants to play out that scenario. How would we deal with the end of everything? Is there a way back from the brink? Will humanity survive?"

He has a point. What zombie fan hasn't watched *Dawn Of The Dead* (the original, natch) and idly wondered, even fantasised, about what the world – and we – would be like, freed from the constraints of society? We could have it all! The best car, the coolest clothes and the freedom to live wherever we wanted, all for free. We wouldn't have to work and, chances are, that annoying neighbour or angry boss would be dead. As Arnold puts it, "no more day-to-day worries – jobs, bills – no checkout lines!" It'd be cool, right?

Well, no. The genius of *Dawn* is that it sets up a consumerist fantasy in the shopping mall sequences, and then immediately rips it to pieces. Life in a post-apocalyptic environment – especially one riddled with flesh-eating ghouls – would be terrifying, brutal and almost certainly very short. To survive in such an environment, you'd have to be a prize bastard along the lines of Sledge the biker, or Captain Rhodes from *Day Of The Dead*.

"I doubt I'd make it," says Arnold. "I not only have no experience with weapons, but I loathe them. I'd either need some very reliable allies to protect me, or I'd be down for the count fast."

"Successful survivors must be brutally ruthless," agrees Simon. "In one famine in ancient Egypt, the people who survived were the ones that cooked and ate their own children. Many survivors of the Titanic disaster were the ones who weren't squeamish about punching their way through crowds, or literally stomping on the faces of fallen men and women in order to reach the lifeboats."

For most of us, this would be – thankfully! – unconscionable behaviour, but as books and films have repeatedly shown us, clinging on to a rigid morality is a sure way to get yourself killed. Just look at the way the characters in *The Walking Dead* – both on screen and in the original comics –



So this is what happens if you let teenagers out after dark.

have been forced to make truly terrible decisions: leaving friends to die, torturing and murdering an antagonistic group in the haunting "Fear The Hunters" story arc and remorselessly disposing of their fallen friends before they come back as dangerous "walkers". With all that in mind, heroic Rick's wobbly sanity makes total sense.

## "WHEN THERE'S NO MORE ROOM LEFT IN HELL..."

So why do zombies and the apocalypse fit together so well? Is it the religious connotations? After all, the book of Revelations predicts that the dead will rise again in the end days (though we sincerely doubt that John of Patmos had flesh-eating corpses in mind when he wrote it).

"I suppose for some that's true," says Arnold. "Even if you don't have any particular spiritual beliefs, we live in a culture very much defined by certain global religious notions that even the secular world cannot avoid incorporating. So yes, the notion of an apocalyptic end and the dead rising is an obvious and potent connection that has a real emotional charge."

That said, the religious connotations are just one element – and interestingly, despite the above quote from *Dawn Of The Dead*, one that zombie movies have by and large steered clear of. Simon believes that the living dead and the end of the world are "different sides of the same coin," which is why they go together so well. "Zombies are people who die and come back to a limited form of life. The end of the world story deals with the death of civilisation and then how some limited part of it continues to live on."

There's also plenty of mileage in the fact that, unlike vampires, werewolves or aliens, zombies are, well, us. Philosopher and pop guru Slavoj Žižek once said, "the shock of encountering a zombie is not the shock of encountering a foreign entity, but the shock of being confronted by the disavowed foundation of our own humanness." They're us, but stripped of all our finer aspects – our intelligence and compassion and capacity for selflessness.

"They're the closest to us and they seem the most interesting to explore as a metaphor," agrees Arnold. "They are our family, our friends, even ourselves if we're taken over by whatever is causing the zombie pandemic, so they're the best way to embody what we as a people are afraid of at any given point in our history. They're a dark carnival mirror reflection of ourselves, and a reminder that we often feel civilisation is just one second away from collapse and chaos... and we're really the ones to blame."

In recent years there have been a rash of guidebooks to surviving zombie apocalypses, most notably *World War Z* author Max Brooks's *Zombie Survival Guide*. *The Huffington Post* even has a dedicated section to zombie apocalypse news! For the most part, these are generally pretty funny (though the level of detailed thought Brooks has obviously put in is really quite frightening. Rocking a ponytail? You're dead meat in Brooks's world).

## END TIMES

Five more on-screen apocalypses...

### ZOMBIELAND

Excellent 2009 comedy starring Woody Harrelson and Jesse Eisenberg. It establishes a very sensible set of rules for surviving – and has the second best cameo in comedy history (after David Bowie in *Zoolander*, of course)

### WORLD WAR Z

This summer's big Brad Pitt vehicle, based on Max Brooks's fantastic novel. Rewritten to within an inch of its life, and occasionally bafflingly stupid, it does at least provide some truly widescreen scenes of zombie devastation.

### 28 DAYS LATER

This 2002 Brit-horror gave the genre a much-needed shot of adrenaline. Zombies were now living people infected with a "Rage" virus that turned them into fast, strong and savage killers. A sequel, *28 Weeks Later*, was less effective, but kept enough of the original's bleak spirit.

### DOLLHOUSE

Joss Whedon's underrated series about a people-trafficking, personality-wiping agency



All the fun of the biz



Care in the Community really wasn't working the way it was supposed to.

threw a curveball with two season finales set in a post-apocalyptic future where half the population were mindless killers.

### RESIDENT EVIL

Rubbish and bewilderingly long-running film series inspired by the ace video games. From 2007's *Resident Evil: Extinction* onwards, the series has been set in a *Mad Max* style world that is overrun with super zombies.



# WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF A ZOMBIE OUTBREAK

The object of this leaflet is to prepare you for the possibility of a zombie outbreak. Read this thoroughly and act accordingly.

NOTE: If a zombie outbreak is happening now, then please read much more quickly.

## 1. WARNING

To alert you to the outbreak, we have carefully selected a special warning sound designed to get the maximum response from citizens: a car alarm. If you hear the sound of a car alarm, no matter how distant, do exactly as you normally would in such circumstances and jump to attention.

## 2. SPREAD THE MESSAGE, NOT THE INFECTION

It is important that we are able to identify localised outbreaks to keep track of the infection's spread. If you suspect that you are under attack, please use social media to notify authorities using the specially-prepared hashtag, #LOL (Localised Outbreak Location). For instance, "@zombie\_attack\_victim: Send urgent help - I am being eaten alive by zombies #LOL!" In the event of outbreak, it is estimated that there will be an 80 per cent drop in social media activity. To cope with this, we have assembled a taskforce whose sole job it will be to alleviate this sudden downturn by uploading to the internet funny photos of cats, *Candy Crush Saga* scores and kneejerk casual racism.

## 3. SHELTER

Choose your shelter carefully. Your location will need to be secure, with adequate sanitary facilities and access to an escape route. A non-ground floor flat is ideal, a bouncy castle is not.

## 4. TRANSPORT

Transport by motor vehicle is not advised. If you have to travel, you do so at your own risk. In the event of a zombie outbreak, all road safety and motoring laws are repealed (The George Michael Highway Act). Travelling into an abandoned underpass is a really shit idea.

## 5. FOOD

It is important that emergency food supplies are replenished regularly to help you survive over a sustained period of time. Tinned and powdered food is best for you. This is the only time in your life you will read that sentence. If you start to crave human flesh then you are about to turn - or may already have turned - into a zombie. Have a friend kill you at the earliest available opportunity.

## 6. DEFENCE

The best line of defence against the zombie threat is knowledge. Or a gun. Failing that, a heavy instrument will do (a cricket bat or a stick or whatever). If you find yourself in combat with the infected, you will need to remove the head or destroy the brain. Brain location may prove tricky, particularly in Slough, but it is generally kept in the head area.

# BEST OF LUCK BRITAIN – YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN

– Dr Miles I Hamer



but they also reflect a real concern. This has clearly gone beyond a bit of horror fan speculation into something that people are genuinely thinking about. Okay, so very few people really think that the dead will rise, but it's certainly brought the idea of an imminent apocalypse back into the mainstream for the first time since the paranoid days of the Cold War.

## LIVING ON THROUGH THE APOCALYPSE

So where are we now? The most obvious example of the subgenre is of course, our cover star, *The Walking Dead*. The comic starts from the point of view of Rick Grimes, a cop who is injured and awakes in hospital having missed the fall of mankind. It was an attempt to write a "zombie story that never ends" or, at least, stays with the characters for a good many years. The comic has taken in human-on-human conflicts, the pressures of famine and the gradual rebuilding of small communities – all of which seem to fall to the inevitable tide of the living dead. It drives home time and again how fragile civilisation really is.

The TV show has, arguably, gone even further – certainly in seeding ideas into the minds of the general public and presenting a devastated world that's almost without hope. It's a flawed show, and has occasionally suffered from dodgy pacing, but with its fourth season about to start and all but guaranteed knockout success, it's undoubtedly the most popular exploration of the zombie apocalypse to date.

It's not, however, the most innovative. Isaac Marion's debut novel *Warm Bodies* is a fantastic exploration of identity in a post-apocalyptic world. It's a love story – an aspect that the big-budget movie adaptation played up – but it's also a metaphorical examination of what it means to be human. In the zombie protagonist, R, you have a character learning to find his own way through un-life – something that the author has said reflected his own experiences of leaving a conservative religious upbringing behind (here represented by the zombie ruling classes) and making a new life for himself.

The BBC's recent *In The Flesh* also managed to put a fresh-spin on the zombie apocalypse, being set in a time where civilisation has been more-or-less rebuilt after the zombie uprising, having found a "cure" for "Partially Deceased Syndrome". It's a world of sticky moral quandaries. Is killing a savage zombie still acceptable when there are drugs available that could bring them back to society? Should the dead reject the help of the living and form their own communities? There are no easy answers in the show, and it's all the more compelling for that.

## NEW TRICKS

While the current template is starting to look – much like a rotter or a walker – rather worn out, people like Mira Grant in her superb *Newsflesh* novels, or Dominic Mitchell with *In The Flesh* keep finding ways to keep it fresh.

"Sometimes it's best to turn things on their head," says Simon. "I wrote a story for Allen Ashley's *Catastrophica* called 'The Happy Ending' where the doomed people become deliriously happy that the end had come. I guess the secret is to keep adding something extra that the reader isn't expecting."

In fact, ponders Arnold, the invasion may have already started. "See all those folks walking the streets staring into their cell phones?" Perhaps that's how the world ends – not with a bang, or even a zombie bite, but with a ringtone. **F**

## SIMON CLARK

The author tells us about his favourite undead moments...

*What was the first zombie story you encountered?*  
The first zombie I remember seeing in a film was in Val Lewton's *I Walked With A Zombie*. The voodoo zombie didn't do much other than stand there and stare eerily – yet that really did scare me.

*What are your favourite zombie apocalypse stories, from any medium, and why?*  
The old post-nuclear war TV drama, *Threads*, where survivors are reduced to zombie-like shuffling, grunting shadows of their former selves still chills me to the bone. One of the best zombie movies has to be *Night Of The Living Dead*. It's raw, it's vivid, it's in your face – and it still disturbs me, because the humans are often more alarming than the zombies.

*Can you tell us anything about your new zombie story, and when will it be out?*  
My latest story is "Beheaded By Whip-Wielding Nun" – it appeared in August in *Zombies Vs Robots: Diplomacy*, an anthology published by IDW and featuring stunning artwork by Mike Dubisch. The story is set just outside Whitby in



## BLOOD CRAZY

"NOT SINCE I DISCOVERED CLIVE BARKER HAVE I ENJOYED HORROR SO MUCH!" NIGHTFALL

SIMON CLARK

the aftermath of a huge battle between zombies and robots. As the title suggests, the story has a warrior nun armed with a whip, and a whole lot of red-hot zombie-on-robot action. Yes, I loved *Robot Wars*, so that robot mayhem was in the back of my mind when I was writing my gore-fest!





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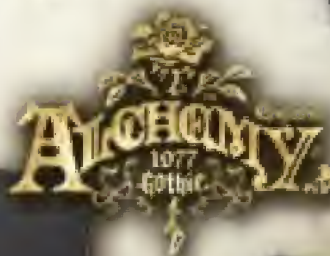
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# Max BROOKS

Stephen Jewell talks to the only man who's practically guaranteed to survive a zombie attack

**Y**ou want to know how it all started?" A malevolent smile spreads across Max Brooks's face as SFX sits with him in a café around the corner from Forbidden Planet. It's a few weeks before the release of Hollywood's blockbuster adaptation of the New York-born author's bestselling novel *World War Z*, and inside the London sci-fi and comics emporium fans are already daubing themselves with undead make-up ahead of his signing later that day. Meanwhile, the 41-year-old is regaling us with fascinating tales of how as a child he would furtively sneak into the bedroom of his parents – comedy legend Mel Brooks and

maggoty flesh out of the eye cavities of a skull. When you're thirteen, that scares you for life."

But it wasn't until a few years later that Brooks first encountered George Romero's 1968 horror masterpiece, *Night Of The Living Dead*, which he admits was his real introduction to the world of zombies. "That movie really freaked me out because it had something that the other one didn't have, as it had hope," reasons Brooks. "That other film was European so it was therefore completely bleak. In *Night Of The Living Dead*, there are actually rules where people are like 'if we shoot him in the head, we'll be okay' or 'they're not that strong as it took five of them to turn over our car.' Then the main character hides in the

production qualities haven't necessarily aged that well. "I don't think that 'dated' is a bad word," he insists. "I think that's good because they're like a snapshot of when they were filmed. When I watch a movie that was made before I was around, I want it to be like a window into how people thought back then. So when I watch *Dawn Of The Dead*, I think 'wow, this was about the rise of consumerism and the decline of the baby boomers.' It was when the supposedly idealistic generation betrayed themselves and abandoned all their ideals for stuff. *Dawn Of The Dead* is one of the greatest American movies as it really defined a generation. It's like the flipside of *Easy Rider*, which is where they're starting out with all these high ideals and *Dawn Of The Dead* is when they fall."

While he believes that the *Night Of The Living Dead* series is the yardstick against which all zombie stories must be measured, Brooks's initial inspiration for *World War Z* was actually Tom Clancy's popular espionage thrillers. "I first read *Hunt For Red October* when I was sixteen," he »

**"Night Of The Living Dead taught me that there was a way out and that you weren't doomed. You just had to make the right decisions"**

the late actress Anne Bancroft – to watch late night horror films whenever they were out of the house.

"I was thirteen years old and was going through puberty," he recalls. "It was about 1985 and in America, the PG13 movie rating had recently come out, which essentially meant that women could take their shirts off in movies for no particular reason. When you're thirteen, that's all you care about, so I used to sit in front of the TV waiting, sometimes for hours, for that one awesome moment when that would happen."

Then one night, the young Max's life was changed forever. "I'd tuned in halfway through to this movie where there was this woman, who was pretty much all the way awesome," he continues. "They only shot her from the waist up and she was walking through some native village and there was some native dance going on. I thought it was the greatest film of my life and then suddenly the dance was interrupted by these walking creatures coming to eat them. I'd accidentally stumbled onto an Italian zombie movie, which was set in New Guinea, and I'm 99 per cent certain that the filmmakers had mixed in some documentary footage of cannibalism of actual people eating flesh. That terrified me so completely and I'll never forget that there was a scene where they went to a house and there was a dead old woman in a wheelchair. One of the guys touches her and a cat jumps out of a hole in her stomach. Maybe in my mind, I've re-edited it but I'm pretty sure that there was also a scene where some guy was poking

basement at the very end and he would have lived if he hadn't accidentally been shot in the head. That taught me that there was a way out and that you weren't doomed. You just had to make the right decisions and that started my whole turn of thinking for years afterwards about what would those right decisions be."

With Romero following *Night Of The Living Dead* with five further instalments, most notably including 1978's *Dawn Of The Dead* and 1985's *Day Of The Dead*, Brooks believes that it is their social subtext that has enabled the films to stand the test of time, even if their rudimentary







**B IS FOR MAX BROOKS**

"I thought it was the greatest film of my life and suddenly the dancers were interrupted by walking cashiers coming to eat them."





says. "He set the world on fire for me because he threw out all that sensationalist Ian Fleming crap and grounded spy novels in reality. His attitude was 'how does the CIA or technology like a Russian submarine really work?' He based everything on homework and I walked away from his books, not only feeling entertained but also smarter."

Subtitled "An Oral History Of The Zombie War," *World War Z* is composed of a succession of interrelated short sequences that gradually detail the emergence of an undead pandemic. Told from the unflinching perspective of doctors, smugglers and other eyewitness accounts, the flesh-eating plague begins in China and quickly grows to encompass much of the planet.

"All the other zombie stories I'd seen up till that point were small scale survival stories," explains Brooks, who drew inspiration from pioneering American historian Studs Terkel's Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Good War*, which concentrates on the experiences of everyday folk during the Second World War. "It's one of my favourite books of all time. He interviewed people not just from all around the world but also from different walks of life, not just soldiers but also politicians and prisoners of war. I thought that was a good way to tell a global story; to do a post mortem Studs Terkel-style oral history."

Taking his lead from the hysteria that was stirred up by the SARS epidemic around a decade ago, the cataclysmic events of *World War Z* are disturbingly close to some real life situations. "The notions of panic and emotional terror really fascinate me," notes Brooks. "It's like the most seminal moment in *Dawn Of The Dead* for me is not the action scenes but when they're watching society break down live on TV and there's that one professor who's telling people 'we've got to be logical and unemotional if we're going to survive'.

You could have said the same thing about the AIDS crisis, as I'm old enough to have lived through that. In America, I watched us go from absolute denial to absolute panic and it made a deep impression on my childhood. So for me, it's not just about how we as individuals would deal with a zombie plague but how we as a country deal with it and also how other countries like Britain, Cuba, New Zealand or India deal with it."

While *World War Z* was published in 2006, Brooks first explored humanity's slim prospects of surviving an undead Armageddon in 2003's *Zombie Survival Guide*. "That came out of the Y2K scare," he says, referring to the Millennium Bug, which falsely predicted a digital meltdown when the year

co-producer and main star Brad Pitt, film studio Paramount have reportedly already rushed an inevitable sequel into development. "I've had no involvement so it's been completely up to them what they do with it," says Brooks, who adopted a strictly hands-off approach towards the filmmakers. "I've actually had to fight for the integrity of the book. My publisher in the US wanted to put Brad Pitt's face on the cover but I said 'absolutely not.' Not that I have anything against Brad but his character is actually not in the book. I didn't want anyone who sees the movie and loves it to pick the book up expecting it to be the further adventures of Gerry Lane and being disappointed."

## "It's not just how we as individuals would deal with a zombie plague, but how we as a country deal with it and how other countries deal with it"

2000 arrived. "All these post-apocalyptic survival guides were coming out back then and I had been thinking for a few years about how I would survive a zombie apocalypse. So I went looking for a book about that but nobody had written it. There was nothing about zombies in the late '90s as they were very unpopular, so I thought I'd write one for myself. I never thought it would be published so I stuck it in a drawer for a few years."

With *The Walking Dead* television show attracting record-breaking audiences for an American cable channel, the zombie genre is currently enjoying a worldwide surge in popularity. And while its failure was widely predicted, Marc Forster's big screen version of *World War Z* has more than held its own at the box office. No doubt much to the delight of its

According to Brooks, the novel was purposely designed to avoid the usual Hollywood tropes. "There's no main character and I've always said that instead of the hero saving the world, it's the world saving itself, which doesn't translate well to a movie," he says. "Also when you tell an oral history, you know who lives and who dies and that takes out a whole level of suspense. It's like with *The Walking Dead*, I understand that a lot of people tune in to find out who's going to die in this week's episode. But in my book, clearly if the character's talking then they will live and I understood going in that some people were going to hate the book just on that principle."

*World War Z* is available now in paperback, [www.maxbrooks.com](http://www.maxbrooks.com).



# WORLD WAR Z: THE ENDING YOU DIDN'T SEE!

Wondering why the film took so long to make? That's what happens when you write two endings. **Will Salmon** investigates...

**WARNING!** If you haven't seen Marc Forster's adaptation of *World War Z* yet, stop reading right now. We're about to give away both the ending to the film, and the ending as originally scripted. They're radically different.

So, as you may recall, Gerry Lane (Brad Pitt) the former UN expert on, er, something, has just escaped zombie-infested Jerusalem. He boards a plane, that gets diverted to a WHO building in Cardiff. Unfortunately, a zombie is on board and the infection spreads quickly among the passengers and crew. Obviously concerned that some innocent people might somehow survive, Gerry's mate Segen decides to detonate a grenade. In a plane. That's flying through the sky. It unsurprisingly causes the aircraft to crash, killing everyone on board, apart from our two heroes, for some reason. They get to the research facility, and are stalked by zombies for the final act until Gerry works it all out and stops for a nice, refreshing can of Pepsi. Yum! Ah, delicious Pepsi. Exactly what you need in a zombie apocalypse. Pepsi. Forget water,

as long as there are cans of life-giving Pepsi around, you're okay! Ahem.

## KEEPING IT COOL

That's not the ending that was planned at the outset, however. In the original third act of the film, the plane lands in Moscow (no grenades). Everyone on board is immediately rounded up by the military and drafted. Gerry has his mobile pinched by a soldier, and all the elderly and infirm are executed. Crikey.

The story then jumps forward in time and we rejoin Gerry, now battle-hardened, fighting zombies in the biting cold of a Russian winter. He eventually realises that the temperature is slowing the undead down, giving the humans an advantage. Retrieving his mobile from the soldier who took it, he manages to call his wife who is in a refugee camp in the Everglades. It's a rough sort of place, so she has taken to sleeping with a soldier (Matthew Fox's character, who makes just a brief cameo in the finished cut of the film) as a way to keep herself and the kids

safe. Enraged by the situation, Gerry, Segen and another pal head back to the US. The film would eventually have ended with Gerry (literally) fighting his way home to rescue his wife and kids.

## ALL CHANGE

So there you go. No cure. No happy ending, but a lot more room for the planned sequels. But also some decisions that might not have sat well with the audience.

Notably, Brad Pitt was concerned with the ending. How much of it was actually filmed is uncertain – though there are photographs online showing Gerry on board an ice-covered ship, and some excellent storyboard work of the Moscow battle. Whatever the case, Pitt called in Damon Lindelof to give his opinion on the film as an outside voice. He suggested that they rewrite the ending from scratch. He also brought in *The Cabin In The Woods'* Drew Goddard, and the film underwent five weeks of reshoots (which rather explains that insane budget).

So there you have it. Sure, the film's detour to Cardiff may seem strangely parochial to us, but it's not in the global scheme of things. And while the ending may have recalled a thousand other zombie flicks, it was at least tense and made sense. Not something that you could always say about the first half of the movie... »

**“How much of the original ending was actually filmed is uncertain, though there are photos showing Gerry on board an ice-covered ship”**



"Look darling, they're asleep – let's nip upstairs for a quickie."



# YOUNG BLOOD

Joseph McCabe speaks with Abigail Hargrove, one of the youngest stars of Marc Forster's *World War Z* movie, about sequels, zombies and sharing pancakes with Magneto...

**A** key figure in both the *World War Z* film that was released, as well as the much-changed ending that was never shown (see previous page for details) is Rachel, the eldest daughter of Gerry Lane (Brad Pitt). She's played by Abigail Hargrove, making her feature film debut.

We caught up with the fourteen-year-old actress at this year's Saturn Awards in Burbank, where she told us about the unseen *World War Z* scenes and her hopes for a sequel (or two).

*World War Z* left a lot of fans wanting more. Could we still see a sequel?

Paramount definitely is planning on doing a sequel. In fact they want to do a third one as well. They're hoping to make this a threesome type thing.

*Have you heard if the studio would like to shoot them back to back?*

I think they want to leave a space between them actually. And make them so that people have to wait for it, because that makes them even more excited. I definitely want to do them. I'm hoping that my character will finally get to kill some zombies, maybe in one of the movies. [Laughs] That would be great.

*The film's ending was reshot. Can you talk about the scenes you shot that we didn't see? Could they perhaps surface on the DVD?*

Right. Well the very end of the movie was completely different. It ended with Brad Pitt actually not coming back to his family, and the family was at this totally different shelter/safe place with Matthew Fox's character. Matthew Fox's character was cut down quite a bit and we ended up not having as much of a big role as we would have had in the first cut. So I don't know if we'll end up seeing any of the scenes that we did. But it's possible.

*If a sequel does happen, have you talked to the filmmakers about where it could go? Would we see more of the camp at which you reunite with Brad Pitt's character?*

Sadly, we haven't talked about that stuff yet.

*Did you read the book beforehand?*

I didn't, but it's actually in the gift bag tonight [at the awards]. So I guess I'll read it now! [Laughs]

*What's next for you?*

I just finished a short film called *The Hunt For The Firebird*. That will be in some film festivals very soon. Other than that I'm just auditioning!

**"I want to do the sequels. I'm hoping that my character will finally get to kill some zombies, maybe. That would be great"**

*What was your favourite scene to shoot in World War Z? Is it a scene we got to see?*

Yes, actually. In the very beginning of the movie when we're all eating breakfast. I got to have loads and loads of pancakes in that scene. It was very fun and delicious. And while we were filming that scene, not that Brad's not awesome enough of course, but... We were all sitting around the breakfast table. We're about to start. The director's

like, "Roll camera." Suddenly a guy walks in and sits next to me. I'm like, "What the heck?" I look over and it's Michael Fassbender from *X-Men: First Class*, and he's like, "Hey guys! What's for breakfast?" Brad's like, "Hey man!" Apparently they're good friends. Michael was in town for the weekend or something - he's not actually in *World War Z* at all. So we all got to meet him. He's very nice and very interesting. **F**



Now that dress is just totally impractical for running away from zombies.

Image: © Startraks Photo/Dex Features



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# COMICS

Once consigned to the unfashionable titles, zombie comics have hit the mainstream. By Mike Molcher

**G**roaning, shuffling, blood-thirsty and relentless – you may have thought zombie comics were dead and buried, but they just keep rising up again and again...

Considering how regularly some predict the demise of the genre, there are more undead comic books out there now than you can shake a sawn-off shotgun at. While *The Walking Dead* dominates the graveyard, it's not surprising that comics have been finding endless ways to reinvent the wraiths.

So while there are George Romero-style shufflers aplenty, you can also find everything from emo-zombies to spandex-clad ones.

## FROM ZERO TO HERO

Comics never used to be that enamoured of zombies, either confining them to horror titles or using them as suitably disposable enemies for their heroes.

But now all that has changed as zombies, followed by their equally motivated army of fans, have become not only a constant staple of popular entertainment, but represent big business – just like in film, the “zombie effect” has spread through comics like your proverbial plague of necrotitis. From Accent UK's *Zombies* anthologies to IDW's horde of undead titles, the industry has been well and truly bitten by the zombie bug.

There's *30 Days Of Night* writer Steve Niles's *Remains*, where a blackjack dealer and an exotic dancer are trapped in a casino surrounded by zombies, plus there's his modern take on *Frankenstein*, *Wake The Dead*, which was an

instant hit. And for those still experiencing *Buffy* withdrawal symptoms there was *Wynonna Earp* – the buxom, leather-clad granddaughter of Wild West legend Wyatt Earp who becomes a hunter of the undead.

In fact, all pretence that zombies aren't a fan pleaser rotted away with titles such as the Eisner Award-nominated *Zombies Vs. Robots* – which is a comic book that certainly lives up to its lurid title. Drawn by IDW regular Ashley Wood, a band of robots protects an infant girl, the last living human being, from a zombie plague in the hopes that they can use her to restart the human race. Writer and IDW head honcho Chris Ryall manages

**"ZOMBIES, FOLLOWED BY THEIR ARMY OF FANS, HAVE BECOME NOT ONLY A CONSTANT STAPLE OF POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT, BUT BIG BUSINESS"**





to writing drama out of, essentially, two groups of stiff automatons bereft of human emotion, but the dramatic device of the defenceless child spurs the action on while Wood's archaic work perfectly suits the post-zombie world. With this and titles including *Zombie* and *Zombies! Feast* plus adaptations of Romero's *Dawn Of The Dead* and *Land Of The Dead*, IDW knows a juicy corpse when it sees one.

Avatar Press got in on the act by printing Warren Ellis's *Black Gas* – in which gas from a fault line turns people into protein-hungry madmen – along with *Escape Of The Living Dead* by the co-writer of the *Night Of The Living Dead* film, John Russo. Debate rages over whether the psychotic monsters of *Crossed*, created by Garth Ennis, qualify as zombies – but the series, also written by Simon Spurrier, David Lapham and Jamie Delano, mines the same horrors and implications of life in a battered and traumatised survivalist culture.

Not unlike Simon Pegg and Edgar Wright's *Shaun Of The Dead* (also adapted into a comic book), the humorous 2007 graphic novel *Zombies Calling* traded on the clichés of the genre. Written and illustrated by Faith Erin Hicks, a zombie movie fan and her two university dorm-mates are caught in the middle of the zombie apocalypse but only she, with her understanding of the "rules" governing the genre, can save them.

It's also easy to forget that one of the most prominent zombie comics is actual Eric Powell's weirdly wonderful series *The Goon*, with its 1940s-meets-the-undead blend of gung-ho newsreel fisticuffs and paranormal insanity, in which zombies are branded as "slackjaws" as they serve the Zombie Priest.

## S IS FOR SUPERHEROES

Such has been the hunger for zombies over the past decade that they've even bled over into the traditionally conservative world of superheroes. Despite being based on throwaway characters from Mark Millar's *Ultimate Fantastic Four* run, *Marvel Zombies* was an unexpected "Elseworlds"-style hit in which an alien virus turned the world's superheroes into flesh-eating monsters. After picking Earth clean of life, the "heroes" bicker over increasingly scarce bodies though, unusually for the genre, the zombies are not mindless cannibals. Their personalities remain intact, so the story focuses as much on them as the few human survivors. The *Marvel Zombies/Army Of Darkness* crossover even saw Ash, the chainsaw-handed hero from the *Evil Dead* movies, take on the super-powered stiff. In fact, so emboldened was Marvel by the series' success that they have revived *Zombie* – otherwise known as Simon Garth – for a four-issue MAX series.

Superhero zombies reached their zenith with the DC mega-event, *Blackest Night*. This sprawling saga is zombie comics' apotheosis – Geoff Johns's brutally violent all-star superhero story saw the rapacious Black Lantern Corps from space sector 666 attack the DC Universe and resuscitate fallen superheroes and villains alike in an attempt to destroy humanity. It had all the ingredients of a true zombie tale – it was gory, it was vicious, it was violent, and ultimately it was disposable horror porn on an epic scale. At the same time, what better way to revive old characters and consign others to the past than a mass rising of the undead?

The pursuit of a new angle on the well-chainsawed genre can take writers down rather odd paths. But as the writer of *Pride And Prejudice And Zombies* – Seth Grahame-Smith – discovered,





blending zombies with different historical periods or famous works of fiction provides fertile grounds. Nowhere is this more evident than in Ian Edginton and Davide Fabbri's *Victorian Undead*, a bloody romp set in Victorian England with Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson caught in the midst of a zombie outbreak. On different lines, Dan Abnett and INJ Culbard's *The New Deadwardians* incorporates zombies into a post-Victorian class structure, where the vampire upper classes prey on the lower classes of zombies and humans. It provides intriguing social commentary along with a rich world in which Chief Inspector George Suttle attempts to solve an upper-class citizen's murder.

Heading further back, Pat Mills's ongoing series for *2000 AD* about a 17th century zombie hunter called Defoe, beautifully illustrated by Leigh Gallagher, combines incredibly well-researched historical detail with copious rescinding of rotten flesh. In a world where magic and science sit side by side, rather than a Great Fire levelling London in 1666, a bizarre comet instead raises the dead. To combat the hordes of "reeks" controlled by malign demonic forces, Defoe – a former anti-Royalist soldier – and his misfit band of zombie hunters attempt to find and destroy the supernatural source of the outbreak while ploughing into crowds of the undead with Mills's characteristic straight-faced didactic dialogue.

Also published in *2000 AD* is rising star Al Ewing's *Zombo*. Wonderfully (and also grotesquely) drawn by Henry Flint, Zombo is part human and part zombie – the result of a top secret government experiment. In the first series he crash lands on the hideous sentient "deathworld" of Chronos, and must help the human passengers survive. The only trouble is, he doesn't really care about them and is more interested in having them for dinner. Despite his generally cheerful disposition, he literally sees people as walking

meat. His first line, amusingly, is "Hullo, my name's Zombo. Can I eat you?" The character became an instant hit for *2000 AD*, and raised both Flint and Ewing's profile significantly.

For sheer variety, though, you can't beat *Recorded Attacks*, which tied in to Max Brooks's popular *The Zombie Survival Guide* and posited various historical zombie outbreaks throughout history – each being tickled in ways specific to that period.

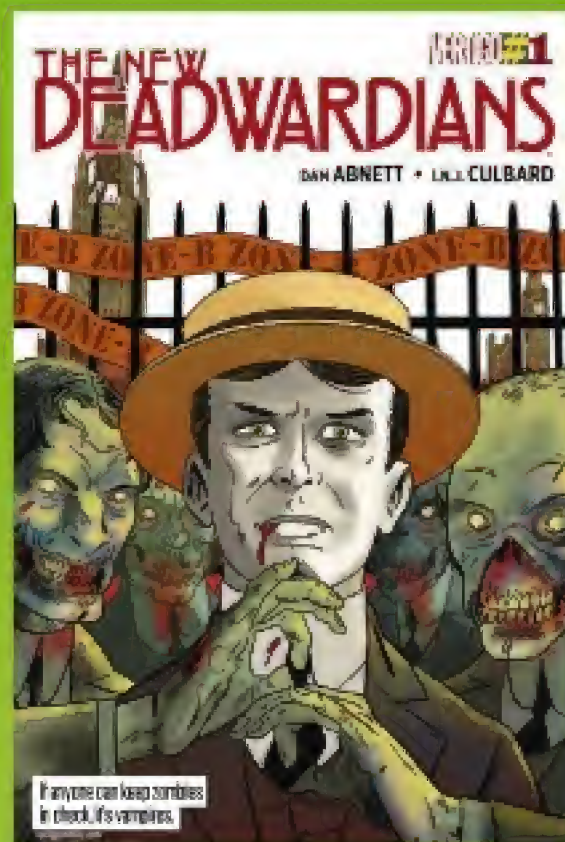
Yet while there are a plethora of traditional zombie tropes – and plenty of clichés – out there, finding new takes on the genre is a challenge comics have been keen to tackle. Zombies have so much more to give and, like an over-inquisitive gravedigger, comic books have been rooting around for the freshest specimens with incredible vigour.

That's particularly evident with *Revival*, written by Tim Seeley and published by Image. Although it bears superficial similarities to the French drama *Les Revenants*, which found a strong audience on British TV as *The Returned*, it's a small-town character drama that's also a disturbing horror series and a "rural noir" mystery. Simply put, the dead do not come back to eat people, they merely wish to return to their everyday lives as if nothing has happened. *Revival* is a case study in character-driven zombie stories that, as it turns out, comics have both the space and depth to explore properly.

## COPS AND ZOMBIES

One series that has combined both this and the more traditional ideas about zombies, as well as finding massive mainstream success, is Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore and Charlie Adlard's *The Walking Dead*. Debuting in 2003, the Eisner-winning series has become its own mini industry with a hit TV show and subsequent game about the survivors of a zombie apocalypse, led by small-town cop Rick Grimes. Kirkman

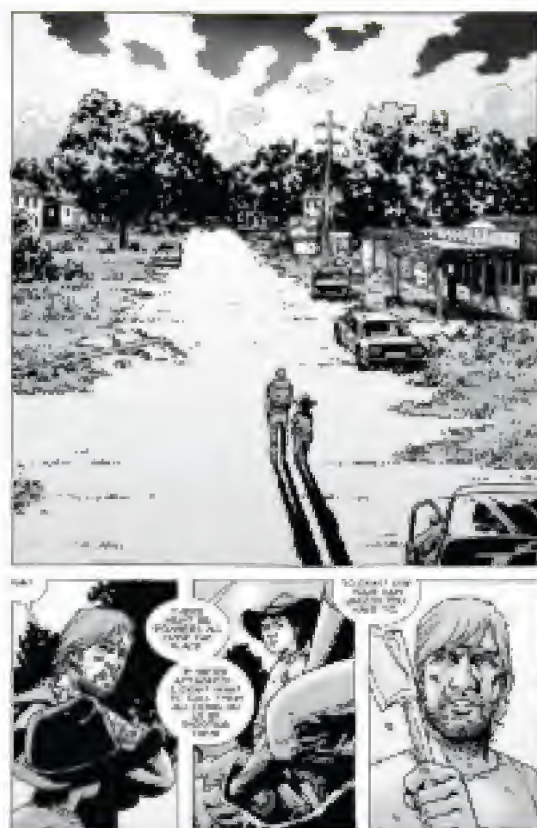
**"THE WALKING DEAD IS A CHARACTER BOOK, IT'S REALLY ABOUT HOW A BUNCH OF DISPARATE PEOPLE COPE IN AN EXTREME SITUATION"**



realised that the zombies may be the main draw, but it's the human dramas going on behind the barricades that keep readers coming back for more, creating an extraordinary amount of room for character development – something that has attracted an audience far beyond that of average comic readers. Adlard's monochrome artwork purposefully reflects the tone of Romero's early films and Kirkman is not afraid to experiment – there have been some issues utterly bereft of any rotting flesh at all.

"I like to think of *The Walking Dead* as a very dramatic book," Kirkman told Playback360, "so much so that the 'zombie' part takes a back seat."

"We're a character book," said Adlard in 2007, "in fact, it's really a book about how a bunch of disparate people cope in an extreme situation, which just happens to be zombies. I think Robert would've lost interest long ago if it was just about







fighting zombies and gore and violence. That sort of stuff does not sustain a book this successful over the period it's lasted. And it's only the human stories that keep it fresh and alive for us as well."

But for all its success, *The Walking Dead* remains very much grounded in Romero's universe of shuffling corpses, survivors, guns, and inevitable disaster. While it has been revolutionary within the industry, it's a fairly traditional tale.

One of the most intriguing takes on the genre has been Chris Roberson and Michael Allred's *iZombie*, published by Vertigo. The series dealt with Gwendolyn Price, a revenant gravedigger in Eugene, Oregon plus her friends Ellie, a 1960s ghost, and Scott, a wereterrier. Gwen can pass for a regular girl, but she needs to eat a brain once a month to keep from losing her memories and intelligence. As a gravedigger she has plenty of access to recently deceased people;

**"I WAS VERY AWARE THAT IT WAS A MODERN TAKE - IT'S REALLY NOT A ZOMBIE BOOK AND I LIKE THAT ASPECT OF IT"**

when she consumes their brains she "inherits" part of the deceased's thoughts.

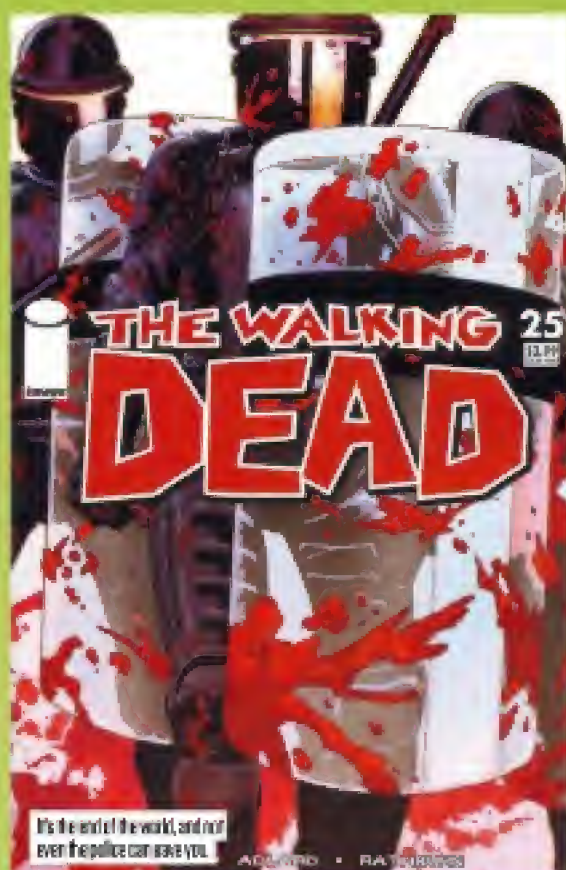
"I've always been a zombie movie fan," Allred says. "I was very aware that it was a modern take, in fact a very different take - it's really not a zombie book and I like that subversive aspect of it. It was ultimately a character piece with a female character which I also found very attractive."

"The original concept was that she would eat a brain and take on aspects of the person whose brain it was and right the wrongs or tie up the loose ends of that person's life, so there was great potential for murder mysteries and things like that. It was originally going to be like a 'brain of the month' kind of series, which I was very happy with."

"For various reasons we got caught up in this whole other sub-plot and then started this epic storyline involving the end of the world. So it became clear to me that it was more of a large graphic novel as opposed to a continuing series and that's what I mean when I say it got a life of its own."

The series was an indie hit, with Allred bringing a touch of retro chie with his Pop Art meets comic book style, but the series was cancelled last year. Allred maintains that they were able to bring the story to a neat close, but the loss of such a left-field book did nothing to help claims that Vertigo may be in trouble.

With every new zombie craze there are those who quickly brand the genre as tired or moribund, yet what the comics industry has reinforced over the last decade is that zombies can be reinvented time and time again. Simple, easy to remould, repurpose and reimagine, it looks like comic books haven't finished off the zombie invasion just yet... **F**



## LEIGH GALLAGHER

We spoke to the Defoe artist about his visceral artwork

**Were zombies easy to transplant to the 17th century?**

Pat Mills was fantastic at giving me loads of research. The point is to completely immerse yourself in the time period. I did it via various DVDs and books and props, and sunk myself into the architecture, fashion, the cold dirt of the streets - then I basically threw a wig on a zombie and kicked them out the door.

**You've drawn thousands of "reeks" for the series. Are you sick of them yet?**

I'm not sick of them; it's the visual element that keeps me interested. The human skeleton - and the skull in particular - is fascinating to look at with all its contours and ridges, and it just works perfectly in dramatic lighting. Add to that some lovely textures like rotting flesh hanging from it and it doesn't get old. It's like in zombie films where they spend all their money on really detailed close-up-ready zombies and then put all the shitty bargain basement ones in the backgrounds - it's basically like that. Yes, I spend twice as long on massive crowd scenes, but it's worth it because you finish, step back, and say "fuck yeah, I did that". And that doesn't happen that often, when you're genuinely proud of a piece like that.

**What's your favourite part of drawing Defoe?**

I genuinely enjoy choreographing and acting out all the scenes - it's like getting into the characters' heads and bringing the emotions and actions to life. It's also great to take hundreds of photos of yourself in manly, sexy poses with toy guns and then turn that into even manlier drawings with you tearing apart a load of zombies. I love drawing in black and white because it takes me back to my early influences of reading old-school horror comics like *Scream*.

**Facing off against a zombie, what weapon would you use?**

I would seduce all the female zombies in the world, then I'd send them out with t-shirts with my face on them to take out the rest of the zombies.







IS FOR

# DARDANO

Without the talents of writer Dardano Sacchetti, Italy's zombie splatter flicks would undoubtedly have had less bite... By Calum Waddell



Dardano Sacchetti may not be the most famous name in Italian horror cinema, but during the gory glory days of pasta plasma spillers, he was – undoubtedly – the most important person to be sitting behind a typewriter. Frequently sharing credit with his wife Elisa Briganti,

Sacchetti penned the scripts for Lucio Fulci's four gut-crunching classics of walking-corpse carnage: *Zombie Flesh Eaters* (1979), *City Of The Living Dead* (1980), *The Beyond* (1981) and *The House By The Cemetery* (1981). During this period, Sacchetti and Fulci revolutionised Euro-horror. Indeed, such evocatively titled home-grown cash-ins as *Erotic Nights Of The Living Dead* (1980), *Nightmare City* (1980) and *Burial Ground* (1981) soon followed, whilst Spain's Jess Franco churned out *Oasis Of The Zombies* (1981) and France's Jean Rollin got in on the act with *Zombie Lake* (1981). Even today, the Italian zombie boom, headlined by Fulci and Sacchetti, continues to inspire the mainstream. Guillermo del Toro counts *Zombie*

**“Guillermo del Toro counts *Zombie Flesh Eaters* as one of his favourite frighteners, and many films owe as much to Rome as to Romero”**

*Flesh Eaters* as one of his favourite frighteners and everything from *Zombieland* (2009) to *The Walking Dead* television series owes as much to Rome as it does to Romero.

Consequently, SFX caught up with Sacchetti for the following rare – and revealing – talk about a career in fear...

*When **Zombie Flesh Eaters** was released in Italy it was called **Zombi 2**, so that it could be marketed as an unofficial sequel to George Romero's **Dawn Of The Dead**, which reached Rome under the moniker of **Zombi**. Can you talk about the inspiration that Romero's work had on **Zombie Flesh Eaters**?*

I have been asked this question before and I can tell you, truthfully, that there is very little influence between the work of Romero and *Zombie Flesh Eaters*. The problem is that our film was released after *Dawn Of The Dead* – but this was never meant

to happen. The producer of *Zombie Flesh Eaters* was an important man called Ugo Tucci, who had worked with Sergio Leone – for instance, he had done *Once Upon A Time In The West*. But he was not sure he wanted to make our movie. I finished the *Zombie Flesh Eaters* script in September or October of 1977 and Ugo said he didn't want to do it and that was when everything went on hold. But in the New Year, about mid-January, he had changed his mind and the film was suddenly happening again. Then we had to look for a director...

*Is it true that they approached another Italian cult filmmaker, Enzo Castellari, before they went to Lucio Fulci?*

Yes, they took my script to Enzo, the famous filmmaker who later went on to make *The Bronx Warriors* – which I wrote with him. He was the producer's first choice. Enzo said he would do



Tellie to her?





Zombie Flesh Eaters: the original (and best?) Fulci/Dardano film.



You're allowed to hide behind the sets at this bit.

it and for about two weeks he was attached as the director. However, Enzo had just had some big hits, such as his spaghetti western *Keoma*, and that meant they had to pay him more for the job. The producers wanted to keep *Zombie Flesh Eaters* as a low-budget film, but Enzo would not do it for the money that was finally offered, so they decided to look elsewhere. Next they went to Joe D'Amato...

*Joe D'Amato will probably be best known to British audiences as the director of "video nasty" Anthropophagous The Beast...*

Yes, he was a very prolific filmmaker, but Joe D'Amato was not interested. However, he read the script and after *Zombie Flesh Eaters* was a big hit he took our leading lady, Tisa Farrow, and made *Anthropophagous The Beast* – which was a copy of Fulci's film [laughs]. Anyway, after D'Amato

**“The producers wanted to keep *Zombie Flesh Eaters* as a low-budget film, and Enzo Castellari would not do it for the money that was offered”**





turned it down the producers went to Fulci. At the time, Lucio was only known for his giallo [mystery] thrillers, which I thought were excellent. He was a big fan of Agatha Christie – but the last movie we had done together, *Murder To The Tune Of Seven Black Notes*, had not been a hit. So, as you can imagine, he was very pleased to be given the chance to do *Zombie Flesh Eaters*.

*And it was clearly an inspired choice because it launched Lucio Fulci onto the international map. *Zombie Flesh Eaters* was a huge success all around the world. But why was it released in Italy as a “sequel” to *Dawn Of The Dead*?*

It was filmed under my original title, *The Island Of The Living Dead*. But then *Zombi*, directed by

George Romero and produced by Dario Argento, was a success in Italy. On the basis of that, Ugo Tucci got the idea to change the title of our film. This really upset Dario and he took us to court. However, Dario ended up losing because, in regards to Italian law at that time, the title to a film did not necessarily need to correspond to its content. So, because of that loophole, *Zombi 2* could still be *Zombi 2* – even if it was not actually a proper follow-up to *Dawn Of The Dead*.

*How did the celebrated scene with the shark fighting the zombie come about?*

That was also because of Ugo Tucci. He told me that he had bought some footage of sharks in Mexico and he was wondering if I could

incorporate this into the script. It was so he could save a little bit of money on the shoot. I said to him, “This is crazy, sharks have nothing to do with this film!” And he said, “Yes, but the story takes place in the Caribbean, there is a boat and there is an island so just think of something.” So I invented a scenario where you think a shark is going to bite someone and, instead, the shark becomes the victim. They had this stuntman in zombie makeup play-fighting with the creature underwater and, miraculously, they got a great scene which people still talk about today [laughs].

*Just a year after *Zombie Flesh Eaters*, yourself and Fulci were working on your next meat-munching classic: *City Of The Living Dead*. Is it safe to say that Fulci was suddenly seen as a very bankable name in the horror genre?*

It was actually the opposite. *Zombie Flesh Eaters* was a worldwide hit and it made tens of millions of dollars for everyone but us. We never saw any of the riches and Fulci and I were without work for the best part of a year. Fulci could not believe his little horror film had been such a success worldwide – and no one in Italy cared.

That was the way it was; in Italy they generally only made comedies and dramas; horror was very rare, with only Mario Bava and Dario Argento carrying the flag. Finally, almost a year later when the foreign money from *Zombie Flesh Eaters* began to come in, we got to do *City Of The Living Dead*...

*City Of The Living Dead is a crazy movie – it features teleporting zombies, lots of misty malevolence and a subplot involving a dead priest trying to cause armageddon. It is a very different film from *Zombie Flesh Eaters*...*

That is probably because it did not start out as a zombie movie [laughs]. Fulci had not done this type of film before *Zombie Flesh Eaters* but, after that was a success, he started to explore the genre. He read a lot of the greats – especially Edgar Allan Poe and HP Lovecraft. With *City Of The Living Dead* he wanted something with the atmosphere of Lovecraft but the film had investors from Germany and they told us they wanted zombies, just like the

## FULCI'S FEARSOME FOURSOME

### ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS

1979 Director: Lucio Fulci Rating: ★★★★★  
Often spoken of in the same breath as *Dawn Of The Dead*, this lacks the depth of Romero's classic but is still a hugely enjoyable movie. Mixing the trad voodoo zombie with modern sensibilities, it also boasts a fabulous theme from Fabio Frizzi and a couple of memorable set-pieces. And where else are you gonna see a zombie fight a shark?

Alternative titles: *Zombi 2*, *Island Of The Flesh Eaters*, *The Island Of The Living Dead* and many more...

### CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD

1980 Director: Lucio Fulci Rating: ★★★★★  
Fulci pays homage to HP Lovecraft in this bonkers and quite operationally gruesome horror about an evil priest bent on bringing about the end of the world. The zombies may not be important to the plot, but there's a lot of gleefully grizzly fun to be had.

ALTERNATIVE TITLES: *The Fear*, *The Gates Of Hell*, *Paura Nella Città Dei Morti Viventi*

### THE BEYOND

1981 Director: Lucio Fulci Rating: ★★★★★  
The second instalment of Fulci's loose “Gates Of Hell” trilogy with Catriona MacColl has some spectacular set-pieces (a dude having his face eaten by tarantulas!), but makes just as little sense as its predecessor. As with *City*, this is all about the dark atmosphere and growing sense of dread.

ALTERNATIVE TITLES: *...E Tu Vivrai Nel Terrore! L'aldilà*

### THE HOUSE BY THE CEMETERY

1981 Director: Lucio Fulci Rating: ★★★★★  
In this moody, impressionistic piece, the zombie Freudstein renews himself by feeding on others. Controversial with some fans for its rambling, disjointed plot, this is also arguably the most accomplished film in the trilogy, with an atmosphere as strange and full of dread as you're likely to find in zombie cinema.

ALTERNATIVE TITLES: *Quella Villa Accanto Al Cimitero*

Will Salmon



## What's in a title?

In Italy the spelling of Zombie is, erm, *Zombi* – which leads to some confusion when trying to maintain the lurid legacy of many of the classic blood-filled pot-boilers that hit screens during the heyday of Euro-horror. It all began with George Romero's *Dawn Of The Dead*, part-financed by Dario Argento (who also cut together a new Euro-edit) and released in Rome under the title of *Zombi*. Lucio Fulci's classic tale of gut-groping ghouliness in the Caribbean – *Zombie Flesh Eaters* – arrived in its home country as *Zombi 2*; tricking indigenous audiences into thinking they were watching a sequel to *Dawn Of The Dead*. It worked: *Zombi 2* was an unexpected smash in Italy. Clearly aware of a guaranteed gold mine, the skid-row, sleep-inducing splatter flick *Burial Ground* (1981) then one-upped Fulci by

hitting theatres as *Zombi 3*, no doubt causing more gnashing of teeth at Dario Argento's office. Meanwhile, *Zombi Holocaust* (1980) was re-titled *Doctor Butcher M.D.* for its American audience, whilst Fulci's original classic of shark-fighting and intestinal-eating hit the United States under the simplified slogan of *Zombie*. When Fulci finally did make his own *Zombi 3* in 1988 it is perhaps no wonder the world had little interest: by that point few outwith the hardest of horror buffs were aware of what was related to what any more. Not that this stopped the Italians from clawing at what was left of the toothsome trend: *Zombi 4* (1988) – directed by Claudio Fragasso, who had produced *Zombi 3* – quickly followed. And the collective groans of VHS shelves across the world were reportedly deafening...



Remember kids: if you're going to lunch someone, try not to do it over a hell portal.



*The House By The Cemetery* didn't start out as a zombie flick – but it finished as one.



last picture we made. So we had to find a way to put zombies in there [laughs].

*The Beyond is similarly strange – it is a haunted house movie right up until the last reel when suddenly zombies start to appear...*

Yes, it was same when we did *The Beyond*. The Germans demanded zombies – and as long as they were in there somewhere we could get the money to make the movie [laughs].

*By the time of *The Beyond*, the Italian film industry was spawning a huge number of low-*

*budget zombie movies which ripped off the formula of the Fulci flicks. How did you react to this?*

I remember seeing *Zombi Holocaust*, made in the same locations as *Zombie Flesh Eaters* and with the same actor, Ian McCulloch, and I was not happy – but it had nothing to do with them copying us! The problem was with the producers. Let me give you an example: look at the old spaghetti westerns. *A Fistful of Dollars* came first and it was quite low budget. Then, after this was a success, Leone made *For A Few Dollars More* and it cost more money and made more money. By the time he was doing *Once Upon A Time In The West* and *A Fistful*

*Of Dynamite* he was given millions of dollars to make his films – and they became blockbusters all over the world. However, the horror producers never understood this simple formula. Every film that came out after *Zombie Flesh Eaters* cost less and less to make so the producers could pocket more of the budget and more of the gross. *Zombi Holocaust* looked even cheaper than *Zombie Flesh Eaters*! This was because in Italy they did not believe in the films. They saw these horror productions as trash – designed solely for the foreign market – and they were always picking the same actors to be in them. David Warbeck, who was in *The Beyond*, was everywhere, and so was Catriona MacColl, who did three films with us: *City Of The Living Dead*, *The Beyond* and *The House By The Cemetery*. There was no attempt to grow the product. This was really evident by the time we did *The House By The Cemetery*...

**“In Italy they did not believe in the films. They saw these horror productions as trash, designed solely for the foreign market”**



And this is why you should always pay attention to rumours of the undead.



If all fun and games until someone loses a nose.



*The House By The Cemetery* marked the end of Fulci's "golden period". It was the last time you both worked together on a surrealistic zombie outing – and the movie, despite now being regarded as a classic of the genre, was not a big hit when it first came out...

I was fed up because things were being done to the same old formula. We would film in a remote house somewhere, do some external scenes in America for a week, so it would look a little like a Hollywood movie, and then return to Rome for everything else. After *Zombie Flesh Eaters* was such a huge success for Fulci we really should have been given more money. It was frustrating. We did *The New York Ripper* after *The House By The Cemetery*, and then we did *Manhattan Baby*. After that I never worked with Fulci again. But I have fond memories of him and of our time together. It was full of adrenaline and invention.

*In The House By The Cemetery an American family moves into an old countryside mansion and find out there is a knife-wielding zombie in the basement. As with City Of The Living Dead and The Beyond, there is not much of the typical "skin chomping" action that one might expect from a walking-corpse caper...*

As with these other films, *The House By The Cemetery* did not begin life as a story about zombies. There is an old fairytale in Italy about an ogre – or a "bogeyman" – that lives in the basement of a big house in the middle of nowhere. A family moves to the house, aware of the legend, but they only discover it is true when it is too late. That is what inspired *The House By The Cemetery*.

*How did the monstrous protagonist in The House By The Cemetery become a zombie?*

Well, that was the fault of Fulci because he still had the same crew, and a lot of the same actors, and he was using the same tricks as well. By the time we did *The House By The Cemetery*, Fulci was just giving the audience what they expected: blood and zombies. That was the simplest thing for him to do and also his weakness. He never understood his own potential, instead he just repeated the formula that made money with *Zombie Flesh Eaters*, and I think the films got weaker because of that.

*Is this why you never worked with Fulci on 1988's Zombi 3, the ill-regarded sequel that he finally made to Zombie Flesh Eaters? Reportedly, it was such a troubled production that Fulci never even finished the film, the producers did...*

By that time, the Italian horror boom was over and Lucio and I had some arguments over the making of our last film, *Manhattan Baby*, which he lost interest in because he thought the script was too intellectual [laughs]. I could see the tide was turning too – the market went from the zombie movies to action films such as *The Bronx Warriors*, which was a huge hit for Enzo Castellari. Then there was Lamberto Bava's *Demons* in 1985, which I also wrote, and that was probably the last really big success that we had. Unfortunately, Lucio was continuing to make smaller and smaller horror movies and with *Zombi 3*, which he hoped would be his big comeback, there was nothing left of our industry anymore. It was a great shame. **F**

# BLU-RAY GIVEAWAY

## Win one of five bundles of Fulci classics

Intrigued by the sound of Lucio Fulci and Dardano Sacchetti's tales of terror? Look no further. Thanks to the kind folks at Arrow, we've got five Blu-ray bundles to give away. The films included are the complete *Gates Of Hell* trilogy (*City Of The Living Dead*, *The Beyond* and *House By The Cemetery*) as well as his eye-busting classic, *Zombie Flesh Eaters*. What's more, the *Flesh Eaters* Blu-ray is the ultra-rare long-deleted steelbook edition.

We fought off a horde of marauding undead to get our mitts on these little beauties, and now we're offering them to you! All you have to do is text us with the answer to the following question...

What cult '70s TV show is *Zombie Flesh Eaters* star Ian McCulloch best known for?

A: *Children Of The Stones* (text SFXFULCI A to 84383)

B: *Survivors* (text SFXFULCI B to 84383)

C: *Tiswas* (text SFXFULCI C to 84383)

Lucio Fulci's classic films *The Beyond*, *City Of The Living Dead*, *House By The Cemetery* and *Zombie Flesh Eaters* have all been restored and are available on Blu-ray & DVD from Arrow Video. For more details visit [www.arrowfilms.co.uk](http://www.arrowfilms.co.uk).



To enter SFX competitions you can either: (a) text your answer to 84383 at any time using the codes above from Tuesday 3 September until midnight Monday 18 November 2013; or (b) you can enter online at [www.sfx.co.uk](http://www.sfx.co.uk) between Tuesday 3 September and midnight Monday 18 November 2013. Prize is as stated and cannot be transferred or refunded. No cash alternative will be offered. The competition is only open to people aged 18 or over. The winners will be selected at random from all the correct entries received between the relevant dates and winners will be notified within 28 days of the closing date. Winners will be required to give details of a delivery address in the UK to which prizes should be sent. Texts will be charged at 01, plus your normal network tariff. Free entry, as well as full terms and conditions, is available online at [www.sfx.co.uk](http://www.sfx.co.uk), but please note that we cannot accept postal entries. Unless otherwise stated, SFX competitions are open to all UK residents of 18 years and over, except employees of: (a) the Company; (b) any third party appointed by the Company to organise and/or manage the Competition; and (c) the Competition sponsor(s). By entering this competition, you consent to us using your personal details to send you information about products and services of future which may be of interest to you. If you do not wish to receive this information, please include the word "NO" at the end of your text message entry.





# Experience

What is it actually like to be chased by zombies?

**Will Salmon** travelled back in time to  
1940s London to find out...





**S**omewhere under London... It's September 1940 and there's a war on. I am lying on a metal grill, peering anxiously down through the gap. Above me, trains rattle and shudder, the people riding them oblivious to what is happening just metres below them. Beneath me, in a brightly lit medical bay, people are talking. People in uniform – Nazis. There's a body on a table. And then the body starts to move...

This is Zombie Blitz 1940 – the latest in a string of zombie events that have been rising up around the UK. Taking place in the dank tunnels under Waterloo, it's somewhere between a ghost train and one of the full-scale "run and gun" games you may have seen advertised. Unlike those events, you're not armed. Instead, you're guided through the tunnels, encountering other characters along the way, gradually building up an idea of what Nazis are doing beneath the streets of London.

"We set Wish up two years ago," says Richard Kershaw, co-founder of the company behind Zombie Blitz 1940, as well as several other zombie-themed events. "I met my business partner, Stephen, out in Vegas racing dune buggies. We wanted to set up a business offering people escapism." The pair hit on the theme for their first zombie event – Boot Camp, in which players become soldiers tasked with battling the undead – almost by accident. "We met an army major who also happened to be an obsessive zombie fan. He came up with Zombie Boot Camp. I was a bit of a sceptic – I knew it'd be fun, but didn't think it'd appeal beyond a geek hardcore. But when *Metro* ran a full-page story on it, we sold it out for a year."

Zombie Boot Camp was followed by Zombie Shopping Mall, Zombie Manor and Zombie Battle London – as featured, bizarrely, on *The Only Way Is Essex*. But for their latest event the team decided to do things differently. "The vintage/historical angle seems to really appeal to a lot of people who wouldn't otherwise go to a zombie experience," says Richard. "The venue beneath Waterloo Station is incredible. It's ideal for something Blitz themed. I know where I'll be hiding out when the apocalypse comes..."

Upon arriving at the designated location (the colourful, legal graffiti zone that is the Old Vic tunnels), civvies are transported back in time. When *SFX* arrives an army truck is parked up

**"I was a bit of a sceptic – I knew it'd be fun, but didn't think it'd appeal beyond a geek hardcore. But *Metro* ran a story and we sold out for a year"**



"Kill the Nazi! Kill the Nazi!"



The crosses, the make-up, the look... We do love the 1940s.



Quick – run the other way while their backs are turned!



outside the location, and the front of the building has been transformed into a faithfully-recreated World War 2-era café serving (absolutely delicious, it has to be said) cake and lemonade. Old newspapers litter the table, and everyone involved in the event is decked out in period dress. If it wasn't for the litter of journo's prodding iPhones, you'd think it was real – despite being tucked just 30 seconds away from a busy London street.

*SFX* is here for press night – the very first time the event has been open to the public. A siren wails, and a group of us are hurried to a bomb shelter by a soldier. There are journalists and bloggers and one man who is either a really over-enthusiastic cosplayer, or part of the game. We can hear the crump of explosions outside and then – shock! – we're trapped. Fortunately a few minutes of rummaging around the room reveals a way out – a hole that leads into a network of tunnels. Two problems: we're gonna have to crawl, and it's pitch black...

## DEEPER UNDERGROUND

What follows is 45 minutes or so of running, falling over, hiding and bumping into people in a panic. There are no weapons, but make no mistake, this is a resoundingly physical experience. At one point, lagging behind slightly, I'm shoved hard through a doorway by the soldier who is guiding us. There's no time for politeness – this is war!

The location, it has to be said, is genuinely impressive. The tunnels are cold and dank and

**"At one point I'm shoved through a doorway by the soldier who is guiding us. There's no time for politeness – this is war!"**

you can feel the occasional rumble of a train above you. It really helps reinforce the idea that you have somehow been transported back in time. And when zombies lurch out at you from the shadows, it's hard not to get carried away. Yes, on more than one occasion, I yelped. In a debonair and manly fashion, of course.

The zombies themselves, it has to be said, deserve credit for remaining in character. Having been the last to escape from a room with a creepy zombie girl in, I take the time to poke my head back around. She's still there... and still lurching balefully towards the door, even though we've all left the room. For a second – just a second – it becomes easy to believe.

Is it scary? Well, sort of – I would say exhilarating more than actually frightening. Certainly the fact of it being press night, with photographers occasionally lurking in the shadows, does take away slightly from the tension. There are a couple of brilliantly executed set-pieces (who's that standing in the corner? Is that a music box playing?), but it's the moments where you're trapped together in a confined space, with other panicking people and an army of zombies lurching towards you, that you really get lost in

the experience. You run, but it's dark, so you bump into people. You yelp in surprise, then laugh it off. But then another zombie appears and makes a grab for you and you freak out, stumbling through the event in an increasingly confused mixture of panic and pleasure. The final stretch, where (very mild spoilers) you're attacked from all sides, is characterised by shouts and screams from an increasingly rattled group.

And then it's done. You're spat out the other side, battered, in some cases a bit bruised, and covered in dust and muck. Luckily there's a bar on site to quench your thirst and soothe your nerves. *SFX* found it a thrilling experience, but immediately wanted to go again. According to Richard, others have had different responses. "We've had people propose marriage at our events and grown men in tears at *Zombie Boot Camp*," he says. "The response to *Zombie Blitz* has been tremendous. The historical angle seems to really appeal to a lot of people who wouldn't otherwise go to a zombie experience."

We've all wondered what we'd do in the event of a zombie apocalypse. This – and experiences like it – are a fun way to find out. A little pricey, perhaps, but definitely not a day that you're going to forget in a hurry...

*Zombie Blitz 1940* runs on Sundays and costs £65. Head to [www.wish.co.uk](http://www.wish.co.uk) for details.

## Interview with a zombie

Paid to chase people then eat their brains?  
Sounds like a pretty cool job to us

### Who are you, and what do you do?

My name is Robert Hall, I'm 31 and I live in Lichfield, in Staffordshire. I'm a freelance semi-professional zombie.

### What does that actually involve?

So far I've done one of the zombie experiences for Wish, and I've done some TV work. Saturday just gone I did some filming for a prime-time TV programme in Taiwan – a documentary about zombie experiences. I've done a similar thing for the Discovery channel, I was on *Big Brother* a couple of weeks ago and I've done a TV advert for GiffGaff.

### How did you get started as a zombie?

It all started for me last June, at a Wish zombie audition in Manchester. I went along to that and six months later I found out that I'd won. The Manchester job didn't work out in the end, but it's what got me involved in this.

### What does the job involve?

A lot of make-up! Like I say, I've only done one of the experience days so far, but it was *Zombie Boot Camp*, which is a frenetic *28 Days Later* style, adrenaline fuelled, hand-to-hand combat game, so the make-up has to be quite detailed as you're going to be getting close to people. It takes about 30 to 40 minutes to put on, making me pale, giving me sunken eyes and then applying the blood to make it look convincing.

### How long are you dressed as a zombie in a typical session?

On the experience day I did it was two sessions, both about two to three hours long, with a decent break in the middle. On TV it was a case of get in at 9am, leave at 11pm! It's knackered, but it's so much fun.

### How do people react when they see you?

It does vary quite a bit. People tend to either scream and back away or, like in the experience, get filled with adrenaline and charge you. I prefer the scared reaction!

### Are you a zombie fan?

I love them! I've loved them since I was a teenager. It started with the *Resident Evil* games on the old PlayStation but then I got into films and comics as well. My favourite film is *Zombieland*, but my favourite zombie thing overall is Max Brooks's novel, *World War Z*.

### Do you go to conventions?

Yeah, I go to Birmingham Comic Con, but normally I go as anime characters, and I've been as Arthur Dent. But the last time I went, I dressed as zombie Arthur Dent! It was great, I had people who thought I'd stepped out of *The Walking Dead*!



This is the point where you get an annoying itch on your skin, of course.



English people get realigned when they haven't dressed for the weather.





We know what you're thinking: what happens if she gets her head stuck?



A chance to explore the sunnier parts of London...



Please note: we do not advocate actually shooting annoying commuters.

## Battling the undead

But wait, there's more... Zombie experiences around the country

### **Zombie Manor/Zombie Boot Camp/Zombie Shopping Mall**

As well as Zombie Blitz 1940, Wish offer these three other events, each taking place in different secret locations. Zombie Shopping Mall recreates that *Dawn Of The Dead* vibe in an abandoned shopping centre. Zombie Manor House takes place over a 65-acre estate in Greater Manchester, where you must investigate undead goings on. And for the hardy, Zombie Boot Camp puts you through military training, equips you with weapons and puts you to work clearing a warehouse full of zombies.

### **2.8 Hours Later**

Easily the biggest of the zombie experience companies in the UK, 2.8 Hours Later run events in different locations across England, Scotland and Wales. Each game lasts up to three hours, and players must make their way through the city to different checkpoints, dodging zombies on the way. They're knacker events but there is, at least, a zombie disco at the end where everyone (living and dead) can kick back and relax.

### **Zed Events**

These guys provide several different events including The Manor, The Mall and the ominous sounding Desolate Lakes survival weekend, which is billed as a "two-day survival test in the wilderness". You'll be taught to survive in the wild, make water safe to drink, light fires and, of course, battle zombies.



Admit it - you want to pull faces and flick his nose to see if he reacts, don't you?





# FRENCH ZOMBIES

*The Returned* was the surprise hit of the summer. **Will Salmon** spoke to producer Caroline Benjo and creator Fabrice Gobert about the origins of the ominous undead saga...

**S**ome shows have “hit potential” written over them right from the start. *The Walking Dead*, *Game Of Thrones*, *Agents Of SHIELD* (we hope)... But others are a gamble. Such was the case with *Les Revenants*, aka *The Returned* (also, at one point, *Rebound*). The first foreign language show Channel 4 had broadcast in 20 years, with no stars known to the British public and a story that was big on mystery and strange happenings, but not exactly forthcoming with, y’know, explanations. But it worked! The show pulled in regular viewing figures of 1.5 million for Channel 4 and became an instant talking point in offices and bus stops around the country, with BBC’s Mark Riley regularly mentioning it on his radio show. We spoke to producer Caroline Benjo and writer/director Fabrice Gobert shortly before the show’s UK debut to find out more about its genesis...

*How did you come to work on this show – you’re mostly known for films, aren’t you?*

**Caroline Benjo:** We actually decided to start producing TV series about six or seven years ago, because we really thought that things were happening there that weren’t in cinema, and there were some challenges that we wanted to face. We hired a young man [Fabrice Gobert] from a TV background to develop projects with me. We decided to look into our own catalogue and see if we had made some films that could be a starting point to develop a series, and *Les Revenants*, which we produced 10 years ago, was one of them.

*What was it about the film that appealed?*

**Fabrice Gobert:** I thought that the dead coming back, but in a realistic way, was a perfect starting point for a TV show. I found it particularly interesting to mix the fantastic with hyperrealism as Robin Campillo did in his feature film.

**CB:** It was in the genre that we wanted to explore. A genre that was extremely well defined by American TV and features – which was the zombie genre. But the film that we produced developed it in a very realistic way, we thought it would be very interesting to deal with these issues, but through this approach that was extremely naturalistic. What if one day somebody knocks at your door and it’s a loved one that you lost?

**FG:** At the beginning of the film, there is a massive come back of dead people. In the first

“We thought it would be very interesting to deal with these issues, but through this approach that was extremely naturalistic”





# ZOMBIE LAKE

Or what happens when you make a film with no script

Rating: ★★★★★

The original face of French fear was undoubtedly Jean Rollin – the arthouse horror auteur whose best known works, such as *Requiem For A Vampire* (1971), *Fascination* (1979) and *The Living Dead Girl* (1982), cast a strange blend of style and sophistication with, well, lots of nude vampire ladies. Unfortunately, the late filmmaker – who passed away in December 2010 – hit rock bottom with 1981's *Zombie Lake*, his only feature to explicitly tackle George Romero territory. In this awful outing, some Gestapo-ghouls, impeccably clothed and residing at the bottom of a muddy looking pond, rise up and grab skinny-dipping women who, it would seem, can't resist the temptation of taking off their clothes and leaping into a lagoon. The shuffling Nazi nasties soon leave their watery graves and move into town.

As you can guess, *Zombie Lake* is a ludicrous and laughable living dead dud. In addition, Rollin's redundant romp is made all the more infuriating by a repetitive, and seemingly never-ending, soundtrack of stock music. Well aware he was onto a stinker, Rollin removed his name from the movie (going under the pseudonym of JA Laser) and, when interviewed by this writer prior to his death, he was forthright – and in good humour – about the flop.

"Ah, *Zombie Lake* – it is a funny story," he began. "The producers phoned me while I was adjusting my suitcase to go on holiday, and they said 'we need you to make a new zombie film...! I went 'when?' and they said 'tomorrow morning...!'

"Well I was going on my holidays and I said 'call me back in one month and maybe we can talk then.' Well this guy said, 'No, you don't understand, we have to shoot next Monday!' I said, 'How on earth can I do this? I do not even know the script.' He said, 'I will spend time with you and by the end of this evening you will know the story very well.' I thought it was such a funny idea that I agreed not to go on holiday and make the film instead. But, on the set, there was nothing – no script or anything. The producers just told me what to shoot every day. Only later did I find out that the film was supposed to have been done by Jess Franco. But, perhaps wisely, he just didn't turn up and they needed a replacement."

As bad as *Zombie Lake* is, the sad fact remains that the dawn of the French flesh-feasting opus ultimately begins with this backyard bomb... **Calum Waddell**



"Only bad things can come from opening that door..."



There's something about this workshop that makes us uneasy. Not sure what.

**"How are we going to make it believable? You cannot be shy. You have to be provocative and propose things that will be challenging"**

episode of the TV show, there are only a handful. It was necessary for me have fewer dead people, because it allows us to feel closer to the emotional consequences of their strange comeback. A radical change was also that dead people don't know they are dead, and that the living have to tell them.

**What are the benefits of telling this story as a television series, rather than as a film?**

**FG:** In the television series I really like, like *Six Feet Under* and *The Sopranos*, the characters are more important than the story. A series gives you time to develop characters and to show their evolution over a long time. It is fascinating to see Meadow [from *The Sopranos*] growing up. I hope we will have this opportunity with Victor and Chloé...

**CB:** We weren't going to do something that looked like an American show but was not an American show. They do it so incredibly well, nobody needs

to add anything to that. We really wanted to try to write another chapter of zombie stories with more of a European feeling.

**Is there a lot of fantasy and horror on French television?**

**CB:** Absolutely not. That was really something extremely risky from the broadcaster's point of view and from our point of view. We didn't have any references except from a long time ago – I would say 40 or 50 years ago – where some French writers and directors explored the genre with a very special touch, but that was it. So it was interesting also, to say, "OK, let's try to do it..." and the suspension of disbelief, which is the basis of the success of such a show, is our target. How are we going to make it believable? But you cannot be shy. You have to be provocative and propose things to people that will be challenging.

»



**FG:** In France, there are very good TV shows (like *Engrenages/Spinal*) but not a lot of fantasy TV shows. It may be a cultural problem; there are not a lot of fantastic films either. So it was a real gamble for us. But the truth is I was very comfortable. It would be much more difficult for me to imagine a new police drama!

**Were you surprised by the show's immediate success?**

**FG:** I was very surprised by and very happy about the success. This was completely unexpected. But then *Les Revenants* is not exactly a "horror series". It is more about love than about zombies...

**CB:** It's the highest rated show on Canal+. Every night it was showing, the same number of people were watching. And on the internet the response has been extremely strong too.

**How long did it take you to develop the show, from the initial concept to production?**

**FG:** Caroline and Jimmy Desmarais had the idea five or six years ago but they only contacted me in June 2010, just after they saw my movie *Simon Werner a Disparu*.

**CB:** The development itself was very long. We couldn't find the right person to write it. So we just wrote it and rewrote it and rewrote it. And every time we were reading, we were thinking, "Hm, it's well written, but it's not what we want to do." But we didn't know what we wanted to do, we just knew what we didn't want to do! A few years ago, more or less, I was at the Cannes film Festival and saw *Simon Werner a Disparu* and thought, "my god!"

Suddenly I had in front of me this very talented young director who was also a writer. So when we found Fabrice it took us two and a half years to develop.

**What was the most challenging scene to film?**

**CB:** It was the first encounter between the living and the dead, which is between a mother and her

**"The success was completely unexpected. But then *Les Revenants* is not exactly a 'horror series' – it is more about love than zombies..."**

daughter. When Fabrice came up with the scene and we read it we thought, "Oh my god, this is it!" But then afterwards we had no idea if it was going to work. We were on set that night because we were worried the scene was not going to work, but we knew right away while watching it that he had captured something quite exceptional and that this scene was a very good sign of what was going to follow.

**It's a fabulous scene. It's a really conflicting mass of emotions...**

**CB:** Absolutely. Very conflicting. I think for anybody in such a situation it would be conflicting. There is even some humour in it, because this situation is absurd, and the absurdity has to be taken into account. I think Fabrice's talent was also not to take himself too seriously when dealing with something so emotionally riveting.

**The locations are a huge part of the show. Did you always have that area in mind?**

**CB:** We actually explored all of the regions of the Alps because we really needed the mountains to be a character, but this location had the human scale. It was exactly the one we needed. It was not a huge city, we knew we could play with it and create something totally fictional – that the geography was not going to impose on us a certain treatment, that it was flexible and we could use it the way we wanted.

What was great was the fact that the mountains were very close so that depending on the angle of the camera, you almost have a sensation that nature is just growing around you and getting closer and closer in a very claustrophobic way.

**FG:** We shot the main scenes in the neighbourhood of Annecy. The locals were very kind but very curious and a little bit afraid about the story we were telling...


**It reminds me a little of *Twin Peaks* in that respect. Was that an influence on the show?**

**CB:** Well, when you take a small remote place near a lake surrounded by mountains you are into something very *Twin Peaks* like. But it was... I mean for Fabrice of course he knew the series and respected it. But interestingly enough there's another series by Jane Campion, *Top Of The Lake*, which is also set in a village near a lake surrounded by mountains. It's the perfect setting to establish a strong mystery story.

**Mogwai's soundtrack is excellent. How did you come to work with them?**

**CB:** We knew their music and loved it. With Mogwai you really had an astonishing collaboration because they composed the music based on the scripts. We had a few episodes translated, but they didn't have the images. I don't even think we had begun the shooting when we received the first music. We loved it right away and Fabrice used the music on the set to put the actors in a certain kind of mood. Very often you use music for the actors so they have the same feeling, you know. We were editing and using the music at the same time, there was something that was really working very well.

**How far along are you with season two?**

**FG:** We are writing the scripts of season two. It's difficult to talk about without spoiling... sorry! We'll start shooting at the beginning of 2014. 

## THEY CAME BACK: THE RETURNED MOVIE

Robin Campillo's 2004 movie provided inspiration for the TV show

You already know the story. One day, with no logical explanation, the dead come home. But in Robin Campillo's *They Came Back* (aka *Les Revenants/The Returned*), what happens next is very different to the TV show...

The film starts with the mysterious return already in full effect, but it isn't restricted to a handful of people in a small Alpine town – it's stated that 70 million have risen worldwide. The film's eerie opening scene shows hundreds of folk walking quietly from a cemetery, all fit, healthy and inexplicably dressed in pastel tones.

The links between the film and the show are few (though Frédéric Pierrot – Jérôme in the series – plays Gardet here), but both share a surreal tone, as the laws of nature break down.

Campillo's eerie film echoes *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* as well as *Night Of The Living Dead*. The returned aren't physically threatening, but there's something unsettling about their behaviour. They meet at night, rarely talk and have a blank, almost child-like demeanour. They're the same people, but something has changed within them. They sometimes seem more like dementia

victims, rather than zombies, which makes it all the more painful for their loved ones.

There are social problems too. Add 70 million more people to the world and things are bound to get messy. Where do they live? Can they be trusted? What are they going to do for work?

As with the television show, *They Came Back* is low on concrete answers or explanations. Arguably, it doesn't matter. This is a low key, but intense and intelligent thriller based on a single great idea. It's no surprise that it's formed the basis for such a provocative show.





# A BRIEF HISTORY OF FRENCH FANTASY FILMS

*Les Revenants* and *Zombie Lake* aren't quite the only SF, fantasy or horror to come out of France...



Luckily there weren't much traffic that day.



Being attacked while wearing a supervillain costume is just embarrassing.



Being shown with attractive redhead, check. No wonder it was good.

- 1902 **A TRIP TO THE MOON (LE VOYAGE DANS LA LUNE)**  
Georges Méliès' 14-minute opus is one of the first known SF films, and a technical masterpiece, given the limited resources.
- 1934 **LILIOM**  
Metropolis director Fritz Lang helmed this adaptation of a Hungarian play about a man rejected from heaven and sent back to Earth to do one good deed.
- 1946 **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (LA BELLE ET LA BÊTE)**  
Jean Cocteau's classic adaptation was described by the late, great Roger Ebert as "one of the most magical of all films" and became a cult favourite.
- 1966 **JULIET OF THE SPIRITS (GIULIETTA DEGLI SPIRITI)**  
An Italian-French co-production, Fellini's fantasy-comedy explores the subconscious desires of Giulietta Baldoni, as she works up the courage to leave her philandering husband.
- 1993 **THE VISITORS (LES VISITEURS)**  
Cult time-travel comedy about Godefroy, a 12th-century knight transported through time to the 20th century. A sequel followed, five years later and a third instalment is due in 2014.
- 1996 **CITY OF LOST CHILDREN (LA CITÉ DES ENFANTS PERDUS)**  
Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro's follow-up to 1991's *Delicatessen* is a visually stunning film of clones, dreams and stolen children that explores the duo's twisted aesthetic even further.
- 2009 **ENTER THE VOID**  
Gaspar Noé's divisive fantasy follows a drug dealer having an out-of-body experience after being shot by the police. It flopped, but was a minor critical hit.





# GAMES

Andy Kelly shows us the best ways to battle the undead without getting red on you

**V**ideogame developers love zombies. They don't have to program any complex artificial intelligence, but they're still endlessly fun to slaughter and toy with. Over the years there have been a lot of different twists on the genre, and below we present, for our money, the best. While you can be scared by a film or book, nothing beats the immersion of a good zombie videogame. The threat feels more real – as does slamming a heavy piece of wood over their heads or blowing them away with a shotgun.

**The Walking Dead (2012)** PC, iOS, X360, PS3

## Best for... Emotion

Based on Robert Kirkman's original comic, *The Walking Dead* is an episodic adventure game that follows a group of survivors as they struggle to survive in post-outbreak Georgia. It might be light on challenging gameplay, but it's also one of the best-written, most emotionally affecting videogames ever made.

Decisions you make echo through the five episodes, changing the course of story and altering your relationship with the characters. You grow

so attached to the cast – especially Clementine, a young girl who the main character, Lee, has to protect – that a few choices are genuinely difficult to make, and you often only get a few seconds to make them. You get so drawn into the story that when a character dies because of something you did, it plays on your conscience.

At the end of each episode your decisions are compared to others who played the game. It's always amusing – and slightly worrying – to see that you're one of only a small percentage of people who did something terrible. The developers even used this data to develop the story in later episodes. By focusing on human drama instead of the zombies, it's a refreshing take on the genre.

**Resident Evil (1996)** PC, PSone, DS

## Best for... Scares

The original survival horror. *Resident Evil* was created by Japanese game designer Shinji Mikami and became an incredibly successful franchise. The series has since changed beyond all recognition, focusing more on big, dumb Michael Bay-style action, but the original is still one of the best examples of when the genre was all about tension, claustrophobia, and shambling zombies.

One of the most famous moments in the game is when you're walking through an eerily silent corridor, only for an infected dog to burst through a glass window. It's one of the first times we can remember a videogame ever making us jump, even though it's a bit of a cheap scare. Mostly, though, its horror is more low-key. Set in an isolated mansion in the middle of a forest, the environment is just as nerve-racking as the undead who wander its narrow corridors. You're always wary of what lies around the next corner, and ammo and health are in limited supply.

It's also famous for its hilariously bad soap-opera acting and script, but that only adds to its charm. "You were almost a Jill sandwich!" one character exclaims as he rescues hero Jill Valentine just as she's about to be crushed by a lowering ceiling. There are better, and scarier, horror games out there, but *Resident Evil*'s legacy makes it worth revisiting. That dog still makes us jump.





**The Last Of Us (2013) PS3**

## Best for... Atmosphere

In nature there's a stranger-than-fiction fungus called Cordyceps that grows in the bodies of insects, then controls *their minds* to make them move to higher ground and spread its spores. *The Last Of Us* imagines that this bizarre parasite is now somehow able to infect humans, and the outbreak has reduced the United States to a post-apocalyptic wasteland. Cities either lie abandoned or are sealed off and controlled by a brutal militaristic government. Groups of bandits stalk the wilderness for survivors to rob, and the infected lurk in every shadowy corner.

It's a grim setting, but the game's stunning visuals and art direction make it as richly detailed and atmospheric as any Hollywood film – and it had a similar budget. You play as Joel, a world-weary black marketeer who's managed to survive for twenty years in military-controlled Boston. He's charged with leading Ellie, a smart, witty young girl born after the outbreak, across the ruins of America to a mysterious group called the Fireflies. The relationship between the two is what makes the game so special. The writing, characterisation, and acting are uncommonly good, and the emotional journey they go on is just as compelling as their danger-filled road trip.

**Dead Rising 2 (2010) PC, X360, PS3**

## Best for... Weapons

The best way to explain the magic of Capcom's *Dead Rising 2* is to list some of the weapons you can create by sticking objects together with duct tape. The Paddlesaw is a canoe paddle with chainsaws taped to each end. The Heliblade is a remote control helicopter with machetes taped to the blades. The Blitzkrieg is a wheelchair with two machine-guns taped to the arm rests.

Clearly, this isn't about emotive storytelling; it's about killing thousands of zombies in as ridiculous a manner as possible. Set in a Las Vegas-style gambling resort, there are an incredible number of objects to combine and play with. You can electrocute zombies by playing riffs on a battery-rigged guitar, or punch them to death with knives taped to a pair of boxing gloves. It's very silly, but probably the most fun game on our list.

Hero Chuck Greene has three days to survive until rescue arrives, and has to venture out into the zombie-infested Fortune City every few hours to find a cure for his infected daughter. You have to keep your eye on your watch as you play to make sure you don't miss a dose, which is easier said than done when there are so many distractions around you as well as other survivors to rescue.

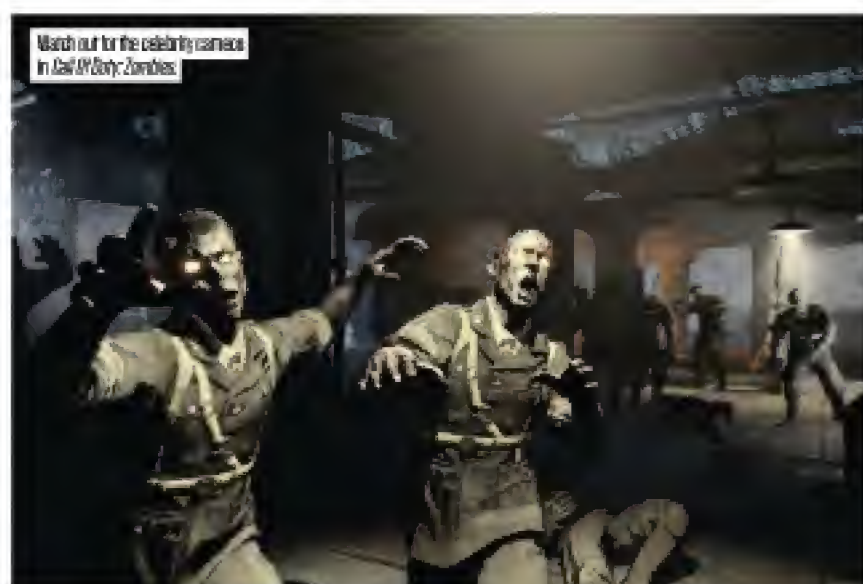
**DayZ (2012) PC**

## Best for... Betrayal

You know where you stand with a zombie. It wants to kill you, then eat you. But humans are a different kind of monster. *DayZ*, an online multiplayer shooter, dumps you in Eastern Europe with hundreds of zombies and dozens of other players. You're fighting over resources to stay alive – food, weapons, water – which results in some brilliant player-created drama. That guy offering you a spare can of beans? He'll probably shoot you in the back later. Big pile of guns in a clearing? A hidden sniper is using it as bait. But people are nice too, and you'll sometimes find players who just want to work together. The great thing about *DayZ* is, you never know until it's too late.







Watch out for the celebrity cameo in *Call Of Duty: Zombies*.



The female zombies are sure to trip over those long skirts, right?



Was this once a beloved playable character? Never mind, it's kill or die.



Oh, this ain't no going to cause any nightmares.

**Call Of Duty: Zombies (2009)** PC, X360, PS3

### Best for... Comedy

Originally an extra bundled with *Call Of Duty: World At War*, *Zombies* has become a big part of the millions-selling FPS series. It sees you and three friends working together to repel increasingly powerful hordes of zombies. In the *Call Of The Dead* expansion, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Robert Englund, Danny Trejo, and Michael Rooker star as the lead characters, with a cameo by George Romero as a zombie. In *Black Ops*, a special map set in the Pentagon in the '60s sees John F Kennedy, Robert McNamara, Richard Nixon, and Fidel Castro teaming up to stop the undead hordes.

**Plants vs. Zombies (2009)** PC, iOS, X360, PS3

### Best for... Strategy

This madly addictive strategy game from Bejeweled creators PopCap sees you defending a garden from waves of zombies using an army of weaponised plants. Peashooters lob projectiles, Wall-nuts block their path, Chompers eat them, and Hypno-



Saving the garden, one Peashooter at a time.

**“Later, a villager comes at you with a chainsaw, and if he catches you, you’ll see Leon’s head being severed in gory, close-up detail”**

shrooms turn them against each other. The colourful visuals and accessibility ease you in, but then it gets surprisingly deep and tactical. It has a great sense of humour too. Clicking “help” on the main menu takes you to a scribbled note, clearly written by a zombie, that reads “When the zombies show up, just sit there and do nothing.”

**Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare (2010)** X360, PS3

### Best for... Cowboys

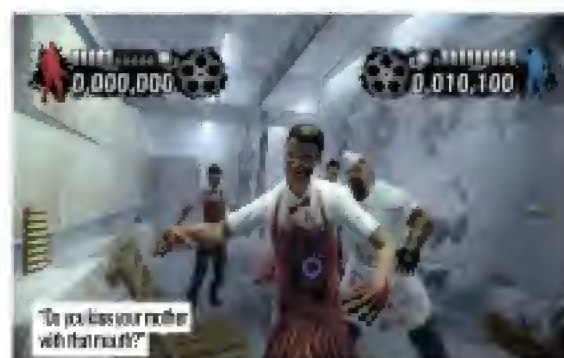
When you install this downloadable add-on, *Red Dead*’s beautiful Wild West open world is transformed into the set of a zombie B-movie. As well as hunting undead versions of the game’s wildlife, you’ll find mythical creatures in the wilderness including Bigfoot and the fabled chupacabra. Bandits and lynch mobs are replaced

by the undead, and zombie-spewing graveyards litter the map. It’s the perfect antidote to the much more serious main game, and the storyline is hilariously tongue-in-cheek. Cowboys and zombies sound like an unlikely mix, but Rockstar made it work.

**The House Of The Dead: Overkill (2009)** Wii, iOS, PS3

### Best for... Swearing

*The House Of The Dead* was a classic Sega arcade game that was inexplicably turned into a low-rent horror film by director Uwe Boll. Much better, however, is *Overkill*, a comedy reboot of the series released for the Wii. It’s notable for being mentally foul-mouthed, which is a surprise considering Nintendo’s family friendly image. The game is inspired by grindhouse cinema, and it never takes itself seriously. It’s hard to with lines like “I’m gonna rip your motherfuckin’ balls off.” In true arcade fashion, it’s an on-rails shooter that uses the Wii Remote in place of a light gun.



“Do you kiss your mother with that meat?”

**Left 4 Dead 2 (2009)** PC, Mac

### Best for... Multiplayer

*Left 4 Dead* is a cooperative zombie-slayer by *Half-Life* creators Valve. It sees four survivors battling their way through an outbreak, and is designed with multiplayer in mind. The second game introduced melee weapons including chainsaws,



a *Shaun Of The Dead*-inspired cricket bat, and a frying pan that makes a satisfying clang when you whack a zombie with it. The genius of *Left 4 Dead* is that no two games are ever the same. An AI "director" works in the background, randomising enemies and weapon placement as you play. If you're doing too well, it'll punish you, brutally.

**ZombiU (2012) Wii U**

### Best for... Survival

Set in London, *ZombiU* is a game that's all about survival. From your base in a sealed-off tube station, you have to venture out into the capital and gather supplies, respond to distress calls, and try and find an escape route. If you die, though, it doesn't mean game over. You appear back in the tube station as a new character, and have to return to where the last one died to grab their backpack, otherwise you lose a lot of precious supplies. The catch? They'll have turned and become a zombie, forcing you to kill them. It's always a sad moment when you have to shoot a character you had managed to keep alive for hours.

**The Typing Of The Dead (1999) PC, Dreamcast**

### Best for... Typing

Based on the original *House Of The Dead* arcade game, this sees you using a keyboard to slay zombies. Yes, really. Words flash up on the screen, and typing each letter fires a bullet. If you type the whole word without making any mistakes, it finishes the zombie off. It sounds ludicrous, but it's actually lots of fun. There's something hilarious about frantically typing "verisimilitude" to kill a zombie. When you finish the game, typing out the entire credits as they roll by will reward you with a dancing zombie. If you've ever wanted to raise your words per minute score, this is the most fun way to do it.

**Resident Evil 4 (2005) GameCube, PC, X360, PS3**

### Best for... Tension

After inventing the survival horror genre, Shinji Mikami reinvented it with *Resident Evil 4*. Instead of fixed camera angles and slow, shuffling zombies, the action was now fully 3D, and the enemies could work together in packs and even sprint after you. Early in the game, hero Leon Kennedy finds himself trapped in a village in the Spanish countryside that's crawling with infected villagers. They just keep coming as you barricade doors, cross rooftops, and search for precious ammo. Later, a villager with a sack over his head comes at you with a chainsaw, and if he catches you, you see Leon's head being severed in gory, close-up detail. More action-packed than the original games, but still incredibly tense.

**StarCraft II: Wings Of Liberty (2010) PC, Mac**

### Best for... Tactics

This sci-fi strategy game features some entertaining single-player missions in which human settlements have been infected by an alien virus, turning them into zombies. One level has a real-time day/night cycle, and you have to use the daylight hours – when the zombies hide underground – to search for survivors and destroy the infected colony. Each night your base is attacked by hordes of undead from all sides, and you have to make good use of infantry, turrets, and bunkers to repel them. As the clock ticks down, the waves get thicker and faster, until you're eventually evacuated.





# THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

Five very different types of videogame zombie



1

**Hunter (*Left 4 Dead*)**

Lurks around corners, hiding in the shadows, and pounces on you. You're left helpless until a friend comes and shoots it off you. If they don't, of course, then you're done for.

**Danger: 5/5**

2

**Ganado (*Resident Evil 4*)**

Spanish for "livestock". These guys can run fast, work in groups, and when you shoot their head off, the gruesome, tentacled parasite controlling them bursts out of their neck.

**Danger: 4/5**



In most zombie fiction, the undead come in two distinct flavours: ones that run, and ones that don't. But in videogames, developers have gameplay to consider, not just the plot or visuals, so they have to come up with something a bit more unique for each type of undead creature they create.

The idea of what exactly counts as a zombie, at least by the classic Romero definition,

is regularly stretched in videogames. The infected creatures in *Resident Evil* have mutated from brain-dead cannon fodder to intelligent foes that can work together to hunt you down. In the *Left 4 Dead* series, the zombies are designed with cooperative play in mind, like the hideous Smoker who incapacitates players with its tendrils, separating them from their team.

Here we present five undead creatures from five different games, each of which present their own distinct challenge to the player. We could debate endlessly about whether they all actually count as zombies, or if they've become so removed from the origins of the term that they're now a different breed of monster altogether, but they all have one thing in common: they're terrifying. **F**



# 3

## Clicker (*The Last of Us*)

This is what happens after long exposure to the mind-controlling fungus. Clickers are blind, but make a sound and they'll find you, grab you, and bite your head off.

**Danger: 3/5**

# 4

## Armoured (*ZombiU*)

These unfortunate souls died as they were trying to protect London from the zombie invasion. Their head is protected, so you have to smash their helmet off before you can kill them.

**Danger: 5/5**

# 5

## Licker (*Resident Evil 2*)

A more extreme mutation of *Resident Evil*'s T-virus. These fiends can climb walls and scuttle across ceilings, whipping you with their monstrous, lizard-like tongue.

**Danger: 4/5**





# Humanising THE ZOMBIE

**Stephen Kelly** argues that zombie stories are no longer aiming for the head, but trying to get inside it

**T**he idea of a rotting, re-animated corpse that feasts upon the flesh of the screaming may seem like a bit of a joke, but zombie mythology – at its best, anyway – has always been so much more than that. Indeed, ever since their earliest known mention in Mesopotamia's 3,000 year-old poem, *The Epic Of Gilgamesh*, the living dead have functioned as a mirror to the grim realities of desperation and fear.

George Romero, for instance, re-wrote the voodoo zombie of old as an apocalyptic army in 1968 with *Night Of The Living Dead*; playing on American fears of invading forces. His sequel, *Dawn Of The Dead*, took aim at the brain-dead nature of consumer culture; something Charlie Brooker's *Dead Set* did similarly with reality TV years later, taking on a genre that devoured our brains in a slightly more figurative way. The most enduring and effective zombie stories, including *28 Days Later*, *The Walking Dead* and Max Brooks's novel, *World War Z* are stories that take a stark look at what happens to human nature when society starts to crumble and we concentrate solely on panicked survival. Here, the real horror wasn't the monsters, but those who fought them only to become one themselves.

Yet with zombie fiction trending so heavily, you could be forgiven for thinking that this fascination with the undead, much like the vampire obsession before it, may be in danger of being done to, well, death. This especially seemed to be the case with the recent cinema release of the aforementioned *World War Z*, where the most interesting part of the story was the hellish problems the film went through to get made in the first place. When it eventually did, after several re-writes and many extra cheques being written, the end result was a creative butchery of Brooks's original ideas, with his humanised zombies being killed off once again, and reborn as two-dimensional CGI fodder for Brad Pitt to run away from. So, where else is there to go?

## DELVING DEEPER

The answer, perhaps, lies in no longer aiming for the head, but getting inside it. Earlier this year, Jonathan Levine's rom-zom-com *Warm Bodies* explored just that; this was a film that led the way in telling us that zombies are people too, taking

a creative step forwards where *World War Z* eventually took a giant leap back.

Adapted from Isaac Marion's novel, *Warm Bodies* told the story of R (Nicholas Hoult), a young man who was a bit more self-aware than your typical corpse. From its opening voiceover, we found that R was capable of thought, guilt and a yearning to be human. It was an interesting take. For years, these stories have blurred the line between zombie and human for satirical effect – Romero's aforementioned sequel, *Dawn Of The Dead*, swiped at the brain-dead nature of consumerism by having his creations return to a mall through "instinct" – but the humanised zombie was rarely a relatable one.

"I value the genre's ability to reflect us," says Levine, who both directed and wrote the screenplay of *Warm Bodies*. "And by going inside

R's head, it allowed us to empathise with him and ask ourselves 'what does it mean to be alive?' Also, by humanising him, it allows us to explore other themes such as tolerance and acceptance – both relevant when talking about stuff like immigration and 'building a wall' like the one the humans build at the end of the movie. That's not intentional, but that's what's so great about zombie movies; you can put stuff like that in there and people will take so many different things from it."

## HOOKED ON A FEELING

Whilst containing some subtle satire (the image of a zombie reading a magazine with Kim Kardashian on the cover, for example), Levine didn't want *Warm Bodies* to be seen as social commentary, but rather a *Romeo And Juliet* love story "through the lens of John Hughes."

**"I feel bad for the zombies – these humans are killing them in such a macho, gleeful way and I'm just thinking 'that's someone's son...'"**



Romeo And Juliet - with  
artificial brain-munching.



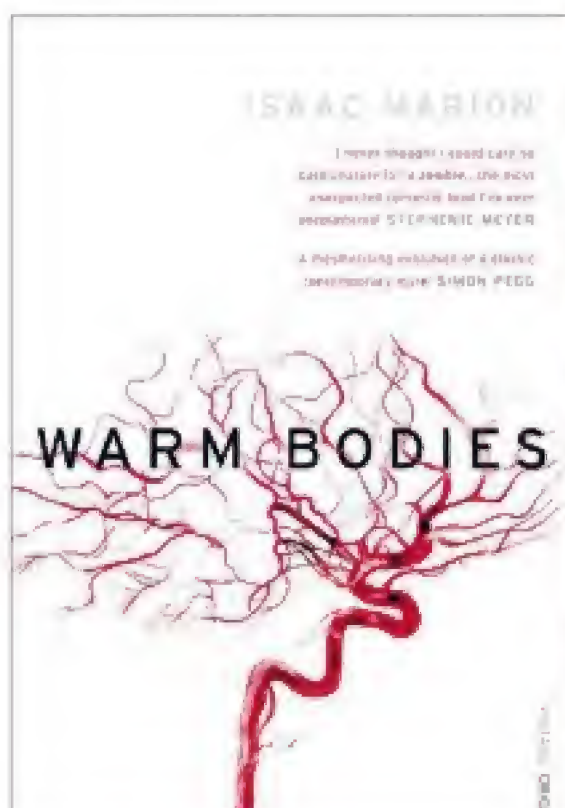
"What I tried to do was hark back to the movies I liked as a young adult; Zemeckis movies like *Back To The Future* and Rob Reiner's *The Princess Bride*," Levine explains. "It was important to give this movie a unique tone, and an irreverence and sense of humour about itself. It's kind of self-aware, but still takes its characters and the stakes seriously." By doing so, he used an awkward zombie falling in love with Teresa Palmer's Julie, a human, to explore teenage feelings of difference, alienation, and heartbreak. As R said at one particularly low point: "it's easier not to feel – then I wouldn't have to feel like this."

For *Warm Bodies*, these themes were glossed with an endearing sense of sentimentality – a sort of conscious, arms-length approach where tongue is firmly in cheek and love conquers all. In Britain, though, about a month later, came BBC3's *In The Flesh*, created by Dominic Mitchell. Here, there was no happily ever after for the humanised zombie – only the cold, hard reality of a difficult present. In fact, if *Warm Bodies* was John Hughes, then *In The Flesh* was, by Mitchell's own admission, more like Ken Loach.

"I wanted to focus on reality," Mitchell remarks. "It was kind of like sci-fi/kitchen-sink. So it still had the scene of the family round the table, but they'd be talking about having to take this medication because their son is one of the living dead, but then they're still just sitting in the kitchen drinking cups of Earl Grey."

Set in the fictional village of Roarton in the aftermath of a zombie apocalypse, *In The Flesh* followed the story of medically reformed "rotter" (the chosen derogatory slur), Kieren Walker, and his reintegration into both the local community and a family that originally lost him to suicide. Unlike Levine, who used the zombie's humanising as more of a means to an end, Mitchell's intentions of analogy are clear.

"When watching movies, I kind of start feeling bad for the zombies," he says. "Because these living humans are killing them in such a macho, gleeful way and I'm just like 'you know, these zombies are someone's son, someone's daughter, someone's mother and father...' I wanted to ground it in that kind of realism – in what would happen if a zombie apocalypse happened in England for real."





## WHY SO SERIOUS?

By choosing such a deliberate approach in empathising with the undead, Mitchell took the genre's potential for critique further than it had ever gone before – while across the pond, the production of *World War Z* was in the process of gradually stripping its narrative layers clean off, and blowing its budget to boot. On his much more modest production, Mitchell didn't need money to make the zombies more real, as his story went deep behind the physical make-up. Instead, *In The Flesh* peered into the zombie's fears rather than ours; those of prejudice, redemption and, as *Warm Bodies*' R touched upon above, whether the pain of being alive is really all that it's cracked up to be.

"They did eat brains and maybe they ate our neighbours' brains or someone in our family's brains, but they're better now because they take medication to control it. How do you come to terms with that?" he asks. "I thought about our attitudes towards mental illness and those who've committed crimes... There's an uneasy parallel and, for some, there's no grey area. As those who've fought zombies said in *In The Flesh*: 'drugs or no drugs, a rotter is a rotter.'"

This idea of the undead reappearing with blood running back in their veins is now being explored even further with Channel 4's French import *The Returned*. Of the same ilk as *In The Flesh*, the drama series again takes place in the isolated environment of a modest village. Locals who had returned to the town from the dead begin deteriorating before everyone's eyes, as the series acts almost as a sequel to *In The Flesh*, exploring the outcome if Mitchell's zombies had stopped taking their medication.

Created by Fabrice Gobert and Caroline Benjo, the pair agree with Mitchell's vision of the zombie trope being explored through "magical realism" rather than fantasy, and cite that perhaps a European approach to the genre is one of the main reasons both *In The Flesh* and *The Returned* have had more of an opportunity to expand on the



American traditions. In a recent interview, Benjo confronted how *In The Flesh* complements *The Returned*'s themes of mortality and morality.

"What Dominic Mitchell does with his zombies in *In The Flesh* is quite comparable," Benjo says. "He twists the genre, and makes it very British with a strong artistic and personal angle. Nothing is American in his show, and nothing is in ours either, even though everybody knows that zombies are quintessentially North American. *The Returned*, like *In The Flesh*, is entirely an auteur's vision."

## CONTINENTAL THINKING

With European influences breathing a different kind of life into Romero's mythologies, it is now to be seen if the country that bore the original zombie

concepts will come round to a more empathic perspective on our blood-strewn friends instead. But amidst Hollywood's preoccupation with profit and cheap scares, it is not surprising to see why *World War Z* as a movie ended up being so... decapitated. However – much like how *Let The Right One In* revolutionised the depth of the vampire legend through the innocence of a child's perception – this new, younger iteration of a 3,000 year tradition could lead American writers to delve deeper too.

## THINGS TO COME

One film that might fit this profile is *Maggie*, an upcoming US drama that centres around a 16-year-old girl who gradually finds herself transforming into a "zombie", but attempts to live her human life all the same. Whether or not it will be painted through coming-of-age humour like *Warm Bodies*, or adolescent anguish like *In The Flesh* remains to be seen – but either way, it could appear that the zombie genre is rising from the ashes; again, Levine muses on the future that his film may just have begun to pave a path for.

"I'm sure someone can take it in a new direction too and continue to make it unique, but I think that for better or worse we may have broken the mould," he says. "Every zombie movie is told from the perspective of the person fighting the zombie, very few of them are about the cure. And for years this alien metaphor at the core of it was that the creatures had joined a mindless group. It was the group versus the individual, and the great thing that Romero did was that he took that central metaphor and continued to push it in new directions, and I hope someone sees what we did and takes that into a new direction as well. That's the great thing about zombie movies. They are a means to an end – they're about what it means to be alive now."

It's introspective themes such as these, as both Levine, Mitchell and others are beginning to agree, that show just how clever, complex and useful a storytelling device the walking dead can be. How, even in a time of zombie saturation, we can create new spin-offs and sub-genres and allow them to teach us things about ourselves that perhaps we just don't want to know. After all: they're only human. **F**

**"In The Flesh twists the genre, and makes it very British with a strong artistic and personal angle – it's entirely an auteur's vision"**



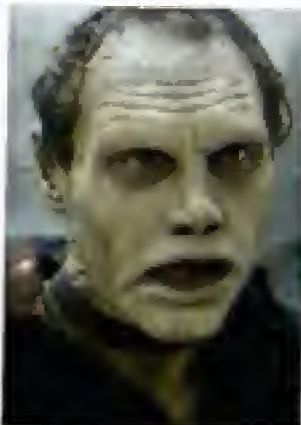


# FRIENDLY FIENDS

Our favourite on-screen zombies that aren't afraid of the human touch

## Bub (Sherman Howard)

From *Day Of The Dead* (1985)

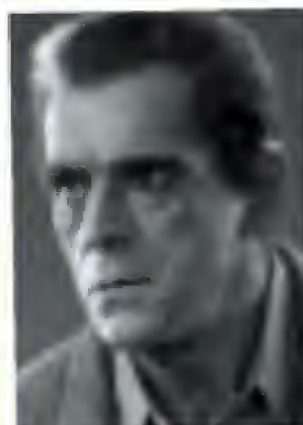


Bub is surely the best loved "nice" zombie of cinema. Sympathetically played by Sherman Howard, his mournful expression hides some unknowable bond with Dr Logan. Is it affection? A child's love for his kind-of-father? Even friendship?

We never really find out. But what we do know is that when Logan is killed, Bub is smart enough to shoot cruel Captain Rhodes, and then mock salute him as his less refined zombie brethren munch on his guts.

## John Ellman (Boris Karloff)

From *The Walking Dead* (1936)



Poor John Ellman. Framed for the murder of a judge, he is wrongly executed. Happily a mechanical heart and "supernatural power" bring him back with a divine purpose: bring the guilty to justice. Ellman was originally written as a monster, but Karloff suggested

that he should be a more noble, sympathetic character. And indeed he doesn't actually harm his enemies: upon seeking them out they each die naturally by their own hand, or from a heart attack – victims of their own guilt.

## R (Nicholas Hoult)

From *Warm Bodies* (2013)

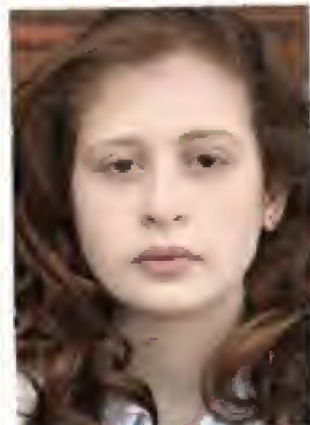


Conflicted flesh-eater R (he's forgotten his real name, but he's pretty sure it begins with that letter) must be the handsomest zombie ever. In Jonathan Levine's adaptation of Isaac Marion's brilliant novel, R is still, essentially, a normal teenager,

only trapped in the rotting body of a shambling zombie. He loves, he hopes and – at one point – he even dreams. But his undead nature and lust for human flesh means that he can never be with his beloved Julie... Or can he?

## Camille (Yara Pilartz)

From *The Returned* (2012)



15-year-old Camille is the first indication we get that something is wrong in the alpine community of *The Returned*. Four years after her death in a bus crash, she returns home to her parents, apparently unscathed. You could argue that

Camille and the other "returned" aren't quite zombies – certainly not in the Romero sense – but they are back from the dead. And Yara Pilartz portrays the character's mixture of confusion and growing horror beautifully.

## Ed (Nick Frost)

From *Shaun Of The Dead* (2004)

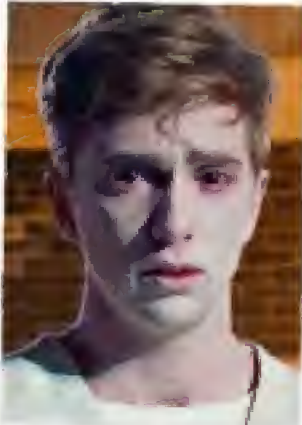


Shaun's best bud Ed (played by Simon Pegg's real life best bud Nick) is a bit of a slacker for most of the film – at one point stopping to check his phone while Shaun fights off a zombie. So why would that change when he becomes undead? Okay, so he's only in his

zombie form for the very last scene, but in that we see that Shaun has got him (mostly) domesticated – and even able to play video games. He certainly doesn't seem drastically different from when he was still alive.

## Kieren (Luke Newberry)

From *In The Flesh* (2013)



"Ben" has it tough. Heartbroken at the death of his boyfriend Rick in Afghanistan, he committed suicide. Then the rising happened, and both he and Rick were brought back as zombies. Now he's forced to deal with anti-zombie attitudes in his

home town, Roarton. Luke Newberry brings a fragility to the character, but also a steely determination. In the series' most pivotal scene, he talks down a group of soldiers from killing a zombie parent and child.

## Johnny Dingle (Andrew Lowery)

From *My Boyfriend's Back* (1993)

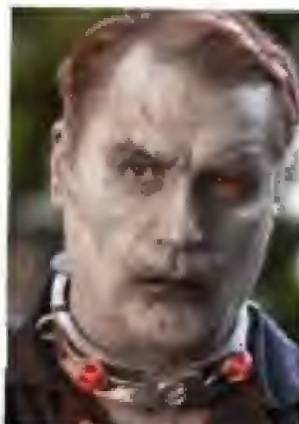


Johnny Dingle is the unfortunate star of this obscure black comedy, originally titled *Johnny Zombie*. Killed while protecting the love of his life from robbers, he's not going to let death get the better of him. He comes back as a zombie so he can finally

take her on a date. One hitch – it turns out that, being dead and all, he has to eat people to stay alive. Okay, so it's a terrible, forgettable movie, but you've gotta feel some sympathy for Johnny. He would do anything for love – and did.

## Fido (Billy Connolly)

From *Fido* (2006)



We never learn his real name, but Billy Connolly (in surely his oddest acting role) brings a lot of character to his mindless brain-muncher. Kept as a pet by little Timmy, he ends up becoming a friend and – somewhat alarmingly – a surrogate father

and husband when Timmy's real dad Bill is killed. He does occasionally kill people, when his protective collar malfunctions, but come on – look at that face. Who could hold a few murders against such an adorable character?

## Sasha (Alexandra Roach)

From *Being Human* (2011)



How very typical of *Being Human* to give us a zombie who comes back, rather than as a mindless shuffler, but as a pisshead party-animal instead. Sasha is loud, rude and hilarious. Sure, it's soon revealed that she is in denial about her undead status, and the

scene where she literally starts to fall apart on the dance floor is fairly gross, but we'll remember her for her touching friendship with Annika that started with the line, "Why don't you take a picture, you nosy bitch!"





# IN THE FLESH

Will Salmon speaks to Luke Newberry, star of the BBC's gritty zombie drama

**W**ith *Merlin* and *Being Human* both dead and buried, *The Pades* unfairly axed after just a single season, and even sturdy old *Doctor Who* having wobbled (critically, at least) through its most recent year, you could be forgiven for thinking that genre telly wasn't faring so well at the BBC right now. But one show stood out in the schedules this year – Dominic Mitchell's witty, intelligent zombie drama, *In The Flesh*.

In the three-part series (recently re-commissioned for a second run of episodes), the survivors of a zombie uprising have managed to contain the undead menace. Four years later they've even developed drugs that help give sufferers of PDS (Partially Deceased Syndrome) their personality and sanity back.

We see this story through the eyes of Kieren – a young man whose boyfriend Rick was killed when serving in Afghanistan. Having struggled

with his loss, Kieren committed suicide – only for “The Rising” to bring him back to life and reunite him with his grieving family.

Amid this stew of conflicting emotions, the newly living Kieren discovers that being gay and undead in a small Lancastrian village is not easy, with prejudice coming from every side. We caught up with actor Luke Newberry, currently rehearsing for a run in *A Little Hotel On The Side* in Bath, to find out more about his experiences with the show...

**Were you surprised by the reception to *In The Flesh*? It really seemed to capture people's imaginations...**

Yeah, it's been really well received. Reading it through, I thought “Oh that's a beautiful story” and you kinda think yeah, that it's the sort of thing that would get a good reception, but then you shoot it and you go “Have I done it justice? Have I played it right?” So to then have that positive response is really pleasing. I'm really happy that it's

**“I get people in the street who say it really affected them, people send letters to say it was great to have a different kind of hero”**

reached the audience and that such a huge range of people have enjoyed it.

**Am I right in saying this was your first leading role for television?**

It was, yeah.

**That must have been kind of intimidating...**

It wasn't really because no one made me feel intimidated. Everything was in it from the get go and we had this amazing script... No, not amazing – I hate saying amazing in interviews! – a really beautiful script. So we were all just really excited about making it. Obviously being the lead kind of established a responsibility. You know, “Oh god, this is on my shoulders,” but I didn't really feel it so much. I really connected with Kieren, and so I didn't really think about whether I was the leading role or not. I just had to play his journey. He was such a well-written character that I could sort of be myself, but through Kieren, I almost didn't feel like I had to play anything. It was quite close to me.

**He's the ultimate outsider in Roarton. Has there ever been a time where you've felt alienated like that, that you maybe drew on for the part?**

I think everyone does at some point, especially at school. Kieren is 17/18 and that's really an age that... I think whatever people say at that age, it's generally a difficult time. You're just in this new body and you're nearly a grown-up. You're still a kid but not, so it's a weird time and I identified with that. I think everyone, at some stage, has felt like an outsider for whatever reason. You know, I don't fit in with this kind of group or whatever.

**What's the fan reaction been like?**

I get fans on Twitter sending nice things. I've met people in the street who say it really affected them and people send letters to say that it was great to have a different kind of hero with Kieren. You don't really see characters like him on TV I think, so it was great.

**How did you land the role in the first place?**

It came to my agent and they read it. Initially you »



...And modelling this year's autumn/winter knitwear range...



...Domineer no trouble, there really is no excuse for that coat with that cardigan.





These hospital meals had  
really taken their toll.



think zombies and you think about a certain type of setting from that. And then I read it and thought, "Oh this is about so much more than zombies." Well, maybe not *more* but just very different to your classic zombie story.

They were doing it up North, so I sent a tape for Johnny Campbell and Annie the producer [Ann Harrison-Baxter] just to put some scenes on tape. Then they wanted to read me in London and I did some reads with the fantastic Emily Bevan [fellow zombie Amy] and David Walmsley [Kieren's boyfriend Rick]. And that was it, and I was told I'd got the part. It all just happened quite quickly. A dream part.

## How long was the shoot?

We shot it in about eight weeks. From October to December. The first block was out in the sticks up North and the last half was all studio stuff.

## How was it acting against Steve Evets? His character [Rick's dad Bill] really puts Ren through the wringer in the show...

Steve's a really nice guy. We didn't chat much; we just sort of did it. But he gave me everything I needed to kind of react off because we had some quite tough scenes together. I think the scene where I kind of blow up at him we were shooting that all day, morning through evening, doing it again and again.

## Those scenes are really intense. That must have been fairly gruelling for you...

It was, yeah. Really exhausting. And he had to be so horrible to me. I remember him once saying,

"I just want to give you a hug, I'm sorry I'm being so horrible." But I welcomed that, I wanted to feel intimidated and angry, and I sort of imagined that he was this figure of discrimination and prejudice and all those things that make you and me angry. But Steve's actually a really nice, funny guy.

## Were you surprised to hear that there would be a second season? It almost feels like a miniseries.

I dunno, I think it worked so well as just a three-part drama. But there were so many things touched upon and I loved everyone that I worked with on that job, and really adored played Kieren so I was really hoping for a second series. It'd come and go, I'd think "Oh no, it won't happen," and someone else would say "No, it's gonna happen." And so it still kinda feels like this far-off fantasy that we're doing it again. But we are! [laughs] I think we start shooting at the end of September, for spring 2014.

## Have you read the scripts yet?

No. I'm quite in the dark at the moment. I'm sure there'll be new characters and new dynamics and stuff. I'm really excited to find out where Kieren's gonna go and where all the characters are gonna end up. All I know is that I'm going to be shooting it and that's it really.

## Is there any particular direction you'd like to take Kieren next series?

I dunno, I'd like to see him have a bit of a better time of things, because his life is pretty difficult. But not too good a time! [laughs] I think it's about finding the light and shade. You don't want to drive people into a black hole, but I don't want to

# CHILDHOOD FANTASIES...

*In The Flesh* wasn't Luke's first brush with fantasy – he was also in *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2*. Kind of.

"It was just a very small part in the epilogue. I played Teddy Lupin – Remus and Tonks' son. I got to go to set and work with the big three [Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint and Emma Watson] and I absolutely loved it. It was one of the big things from my childhood that I really wanted to be in *Harry Potter*. Obviously I was cut from the final film, as were a lot of other characters, but just to be a part of that whole franchise in some way was really great."

put on a red nose in certain scenes, do you know what I mean?

## They are surprisingly funny scripts, aren't they?

Yeah, there are certain characters that bring out certain elements in Kieren; we see the influence of Amy for example, she kinda shakes him up a bit and makes him have fun.

## Are you a fan of zombie movies outside of *In The Flesh*?

Erm, not really no. I watched a bit of *The Walking Dead* and obviously I've seen *Shaun Of The Dead* but I'm not massively into sci-fi or anything. What was exciting about this was that it treated being a zombie as if it was a real condition. How would we cope with that? How would society react and as a family how would you deal with it? And that's

**“What was exciting about this was that it treated being a zombie as if it was a real condition. How would we cope with that?”**







made the zombie genre really exciting to me, so I've kinda grown an interest in that kind of stuff. It's a fascinating concept.

#### What's next for you?

I've just done a film called *Frankenstein's Army* and I'm in *Hercules 3D*. That comes out next year. It's all done. That was pretty epic; there was mud wrestling and lots of comedy – the opposite to *Kieren*. The director, Benny Harlin, he does brilliant action sequences. I play Agamemnon. It's not the historical Agamemnon, that's my character's nickname really. Hercules kind of takes me under his wing. Then after that I'm doing *In The Flesh* again. **F**

## ABOUT LUKE NEWBERRY

He might be young but he's still an experienced actor – Luke Newberry has had an agent since he was seven years old, when he made his first appearance in the short film *Alone*.

Born in Exeter, his first big acting break was in 2003's *The Heart Of Me*, starring Helena Bonham Carter, playing her character Dinah's nephew. Following that, he studied drama at the famous Bristol Old Vic theatre school, and has since landed a string of high-profile projects including a young copper in *Sherlock's* "A Scandal In Belgravia", supernatural drama *Lightfields* for ITV and *Anna Karenina*. He also recently appeared in ace, sort-of-zombie-but-not-quite-enough-so-we-couldn't-cover-it-here movie *Frankenstein's Army*, battling all manner of grizzly monsters.



You ought to get that skin condition looked at, you know.



IS FOR

# JASON

Calum Waddell speaks to Kane Hodder – the only man to don the Friday hockey mask more than once...

**J**ason Voorhees first came to cinematic life in 1980, with the sanguine-stained slice and dice shocker *Friday The 13th*. At the climax of that carnage-packed classic, Jason's demented mother is revealed to be the mysterious marauder who has been killing the youngsters who plan to open the area's long-closed children's camp. Her reasoning? The now-infamous Camp Crystal Lake is the resting place of her son, who drowned because the teens in charge of his swimming lessons were too busy fornicating to pay attention. Beheaded by Alice Hardy (Adrienne King), Mrs Voorhees most certainly would not be returning for a sequel. However, in typical 'jump-scare' fashion, *Friday The 13th* concludes with her little lad leaping out of the lake to drag Alice into the watery depths. Maybe.

With an ambiguous ending (was it just a dream?), *Friday The 13th* hints that there could be something wallowing in the water, but nothing is made conclusive. At least until the splatter-sickie proved to be such a box office behemoth that *Friday The 13th Part II* was rushed into production

and released a year later. In this initial follow-up, set five years after the original, Jason is revealed to be a "wildman", of sorts, living in the woods around Camp Crystal Lake and eager to axe-up anyone who invades his "sacred" grounds. Or something. Invincible enough to survive through two more sequels (he is finally hacked to bits at the climax of 1984's misleadingly titled *Friday The 13th: The Final Chapter*), the mythology of these movies makes not one lick of sense.

For instance, in *Friday The 13th Part V: A New Beginning* (1985), we are told that Jason's body was cremated (in that film it is a copycat killer dishing out the destruction). Nevertheless, in the following year's instalment – *Friday The 13th Part VI: Jason Lives* – our man is shown to be a maggot-ridden, rotting corpse, buried under the ground in a regular coffin. Yet when lightning strikes his body twice, cinema's foremost summer camp stalker is brought back to life as an immortal zombie... complete with inexplicable superpowers. In his first moments of mayhem in *Friday The 13th Part VI*, Mr Voorhees punches a hole straight through someone's torso – and it is at this exact

point that the Crystal Lake capers become increasingly more insane...

Taking over the role of the teen-trepanning terror titan in *Friday The 13th Part VII: The New Blood* (1988) was erstwhile stuntman Kane Hodder, the thespian that really made the machete-swinging maniac his own. Battling a psychic babe who telepathically resurrects Jason (he is drowned at the end of part six), the muscular Hodder was imposing enough to be asked back for 1989's *Friday The 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan*, in which an electric surge nonsensically awakens him from his slumber. Perhaps even more preposterously, *Jason Goes To Hell* (1993) gives the character the ability to jump from body-to-body as a sort of zombie-alien. Moreover, in *Jason X* (2002), when Hodder played the fright-figure for one last time, Camp Crystal Lake's least favourite resident is resurrected twice – once from deep freeze and a second time as a futuristic space-terminator.

In celebration of Jason's days as a certified undead slasher-icon, we caught up with the actor for his own take on the death-defying antics of the Herculean hockey-masked ogre...



Well, it was unfortunate timing.



Stuntman, trouble, serial killer.



Let's start with your own interpretation of Jason. He is presented as either a ghost or a "Wildman" in the woods during the first four films – but by part six he's become a superhuman zombie, right? By the time I got to him he was definitely a zombie. I always thought of him like this: once he was a human but he became a zombie and that is why he cannot be killed any more.

You took over the role of Jason for *Friday The 13th Part VII: The New Blood*. Prior to this, Jason had been played by several different actors. How did you get the role for the seventh movie and then go on to play him four times?

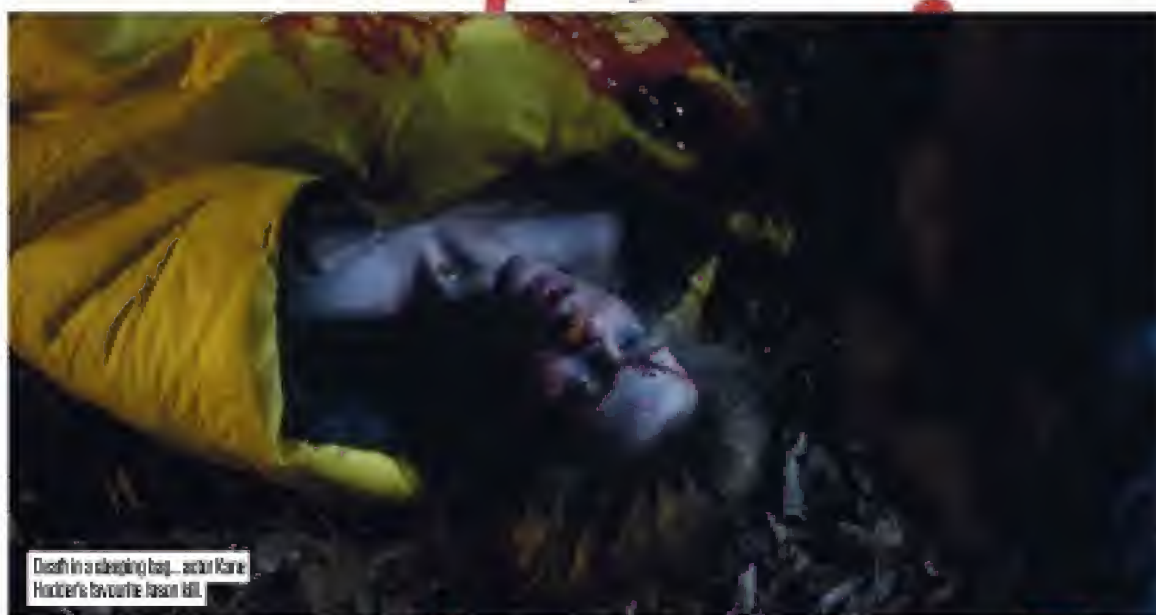
I was the stunt co-ordinator on a movie called *Prison*, directed by Renny Harlin. It's a pretty good horror film and, at the end of it, I also got to play this rotting corpse that comes out of the ground. I was in full body make-up and I spent three and a half hours being made up to look really disgusting [laughs]. The effects artist on that movie was a guy called John Carl Buechler, and he was impressed by how I worked and moved in all of that make-up. He told me, "Facial expressions are hard to express when you have all of that stuff covering you, Kane, but you've done a great job." Then John got the offer to direct *Friday The 13th Part VII* and that was why he suggested I play Jason – because he had to look like a rotten corpse in that movie.

*Friday The 13th Part VII* was the most heavily censored out of the entire franchise. Will we ever see an uncut version?

At the time the censors really had it in for *Friday The 13th*. These films were never very politically correct and the censors just hated them. But, no, I don't think an unrated version exists in any sort of viewable form. They cut out that footage so early on in the editing process that it was still work print quality. It has never been colour corrected or anything – and the quality is terrible. It is unfortunate because every single bit of every single kill was cut out of that movie. The same happened with *Jason Takes Manhattan* but part seven, man... I have never seen a horror movie cut down that



It's awkward when you get your hockey masks and diving masks confused.



Death in a sleeping bag... actor Kane Hodder's favourite Jason kill.

**"The censors really had it in for *Friday The 13th* – these films were never very politically correct and the censors just hated them"**



Remember kids: never light a cigarette while wearing kalspra.



much. You barely see a single trickle of blood in the entire film. All these make-up effects people put in so much time into making a quality piece of work and it ended up on the cutting room floor. It is just so frustrating.

*Are you surprised that they even cut out some of the 'comedy' deaths – such as when Jason kills a girl by stabbing her in the eye with a party horn?* Yeah, that's not one of my favourite. Jason kills but it was fun [laughs]. But not only did they cut the party horn going into her eye, they made an audio censor too. Originally, when I jam that party horn into her eye, it honked. I thought that was so beautiful but the censors took it out and told us it was too brutal. That was what made that death scene work – the honk as it went into her head. It was funny [laughs].

*Do you have a favourite Jason kill?*

My favourite kill is the sleeping bag from part seven. You know – when I pick the girl up in her sleeping bag, give her a big ol' swing and then smash her against a tree... I also liked when I punched the guy's head clean off in *Jason Takes Manhattan*. And when I froze the girl's face in *Jason X* and then smashed it into pieces – that was good fun [laughs].

*Why do you think you became the first guy to play Jason more than once?*

Evidently, at least as far as I know, there was never a situation or performance where the powers that be felt, 'Yeah that is the guy.' But listen, I had to fight to come back and do part eight. It was a lot easier after that. With *Jason Goes To Hell* they just assumed I was going to play the character – and it was the same with *Jason X*. What worked for me was that the fans really responded to the way I played him. I was just very lucky in that regard.

*Do you know if Friday The 13th Part VII: The New Blood was originally pitched as a "Jason*



Jason confirms our suspicion that scenes are never over, a point like

**“My favourite Jason kill is from part seven – when I pick the girl up in her sleeping bag, give her a big ol' swing and smash her against a tree”**

*Vs. Carrie” film – which is commonly rumoured?*

I don't know for sure but – come on – it must have been [laughs]. That is exactly what it was. And here's an interesting piece of trivia – it was originally called *Friday The 13th Part VII: Birthday Bash*. They only changed the title to *The New Blood* much later on.

*Another rumour: in Jason Takes Manhattan, the character actually spends most of the time on a cruise ship headed to New York. Was there ever an original script, entirely set in the Big Apple, that Paramount turned down for being too expensive?* No, I think that's just a rumour. I never saw a script that had Jason in New York for the whole thing. The scripts – and there were a few – always started on a cruise ship.

*In part eight, the director apparently asked you to kick a dog and you refused. Is that story true?*

Yeah, that is a true story. I just didn't think that it fit the character.

*But you never had an issue with Jason hacking up promiscuous teenagers...*

Yeah, he will happily tear someone's head off but the dog is too much [laughs]. I just couldn't picture Jason doing that.

*How would he feel about kittens?*

No, he's an animal himself – he wouldn't hurt kittens either [laughs].

*At the end of part eight, “Zombie Jason” is killed with toxic waste and is consequently revealed to*



Blending in perfectly with the New York as the





Note to commenters: try not to eat the corpses you're examining.

*be the ghost of a little boy. The film does its best with a strange mythology by indicating that Jason did indeed drown as a child in Crystal Lake and has been resurrected many times as a mammoth undead force...*

Let me comment on that because there is a story out there that I hated the ending of *Jason Takes Manhattan*. I didn't hate it. I just wasn't sure what the director wanted to say with it. We spoke about it and, after that, it was fine.

**What was the toughest *Friday The 13th* film for you to make?**

It was *Jason Goes To Hell*. The hockey mask for that movie was built into this prosthetic head and the whole thing slipped over me. In part seven, everything was glued onto my face, and I had the zombie teeth to wear and everything else – so that one took the longest. But the *Jason Goes To Hell* make-up was by far the most uncomfortable. It was far hotter than I was ever used to. I had to wear a cool suit underneath my body appliances – which is a vest that circulates ice water – just so I could work. Part seven and eight I could take the hockey mask off in-between shots but in part nine, because the mask was built into the head that I was having to wear, it was impossible. I never got a breath of fresh air making that movie.

**It was very disappointing news for many fans when it was revealed you were not going to be in *Freddy Vs. Jason*...**

I have been told that and it is nice to hear. I always thought I would play Jason and even Robert Englund said that – he said, “I never thought of it as *Freddy Vs. Jason* so much as *Englund Vs. Hodder*.” It would have been great to see the two of us against each other. We have been friends for years – I even worked with him on *V* back in the '80s.

**Did you watch *Freddy Vs. Jason*?**

I did and it was hard for me to do that. I had the script for that film and I even had meetings with the executives at New Line Cinema, who were

producing it. Then, all of a sudden, I was out for no apparent reason and I still don't know why. But, yeah, I wanted to see the movie because I was eager to see Freddy and Jason together. I'm a horror fan. At the end of it I was like “Man, I wish I hadn't watched it after all...” It was tough for me to sit and see that movie, you know?

**Did you see the remake?**

No, I never saw it. Like I said, *Freddy Vs. Jason* was difficult enough for me to watch. I heard they brought it back to Crystal Lake, which hadn't happened since part seven...

**Yeah, it is set in Crystal Lake but it's also terrible. By far the worst of the *Friday The 13th* movies... Well good, that's good to hear [laughs].**

**One character randomly decides to masturbate into his shoe. With the windows around him wide**

**open and his friends still walking around. For no narrative benefit or purpose... You're making this up [laughs].**

**I'm serious.**

He masturbates into his shoe? Wow [laughs]. Maybe I do need to see this movie [laughs]. That sounds... kind of unbelievable.

**Finally, it would be great if you could clear up a classic Kane Hodder rumour – were you really in the running to be Freddy Krueger?**

I suffered real burns on one of my stunt jobs – I'm still scarred around my neck. And Wes had this idea about a character with burn scars and it happened to be the Freddy thing. I heard about it and I went in to talk to him. I don't even know if he remembers that – but obviously he wanted someone with heavier scarring and it was the right way to go. It was Robert's role and he was the only choice. **F**



Ever feel like people are always trying to drag you down?



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# KICK ASS KILLS!

Zombie films may be full of social commentary, but let's be honest – a lot of the time we're here for the gore. Will Salmon looks at eight memorably macabre moments...

## Little Karen kills her mum

From: *Night Of The Living Dead* (1968)

It may not be very gory, but Karen committing matricide is certainly one of the most disturbing deaths in the canon. After dying and turning into one of the undead, Karen comes after her mum and kills her with a very sharp-looking trowel. You don't see much, just some stabs and a trickle of blood, but the terrified screams are truly haunting.



## A splitting headache

From: *Dead Snow* (2009)

Something about being undead must make you super-strong as well. In *Dead Snow*, one poor soul is grabbed by a group of zombies, has his eyes gouged out and then his head literally pulled in half. The eye-gouging recalls the end of *28 Days Later* and the framing is very *Day Of The Dead*, but there's an energy that makes it a high point in this comedy Nazi zombie flick.



## Daniela gets the chop

From: *The House By The Cemetery* (1981)

Daniela Doria is wandering through an abandoned house, getting increasingly annoyed with her boyfriend Steve who has wandered off. But then she stumbles upon his body, screams – and gets a knife through the back of her skull. There's not a ton of blood, but the blade going straight through and out of her mouth is visceral and effective.



## "I'll have some breast, please."

From: *Burial Ground: The Nights Of Terror* (1981)

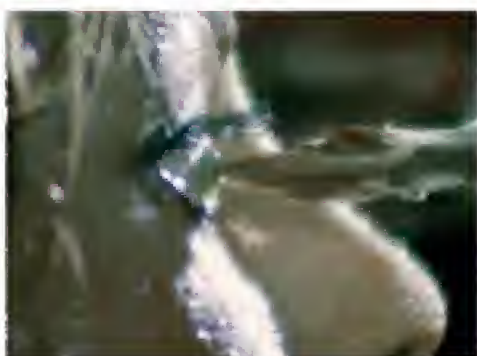
Icky on several levels, *Burial Ground* is usually remembered for the incest subplot between a child and his mother. The kid was, in fact, played by adult actor, Peter Bark. If the whole "shagging your mum" thing wasn't bad enough, the, er, climax of the film features a scene where she offers to breastfeed him and he bites the front of her boob off.



## Pop goes the eyeball

From: *Zombi 2/Zombie Flesh Eaters* (1979)

Fulci's *Zombi 2* (or *Zombie Flesh Eaters*) is remembered for two things. The first is the bewildering – if entertaining – shark versus zombie fight, and the second is this eye-popping moment where an unfortunate Paola is pulled onto a spike of wood. The camera shows the moment it goes into her eyeball in unflinching detail.



## "Choke on 'em!"

From: *Day Of The Dead* (1985)

Captain Rhodes has spent the entirety of this underrated threequel as a vicious dictator, experimenting on poor old zombie Bub. He gets his comeuppance though when Bub shoots him. Wounded, Rhodes can't escape a horde of zombies who literally tear him in half. "Choke on 'em!" he shouts, defiant to the end, as they munch on his guts.



## Sliced and diced

From: *Dawn Of The Dead* (2004)

How we worried when we heard a modern-day remake of *Dawn Of The Dead* was on the cards. But it turned out to be, if not a classic, then a decent, effective and absurdly violent movie. One of the "highlights" is this accidental death by chainsaw, as our heroes flee the zombies in modified buses. They lose control and poor Monica is cleaved in two.



## Puke your guts out

From: *City Of The Living Dead* (1980)

This one is just vile on every level. A couple making out in their car are interrupted by the evil priest, who stares them to death. Mesmerised with fear, the woman starts to bleed from her eyes and then vomit up her own guts, while her fella's brain gets mashed. An impressive bit of effects work here that reminds us why Fulci was a god of gore.







# LOW BUDGET

Two-hundred million for a zombie movie? Pah!  
**Miles Hamer** checks out seven micro-budgeted  
productions that prove you don't need megabucks





## The Battery (2012)

Dir: Jeremy Gardner

Starring: Jeremy Gardner, Adam Cronheim

Available: iTunes / Amazon Prime / PSN / Xbox Live

As much buddy road-movie as it is blood 'n' mean horror, *The Battery* is a dusty, sun-bleached take on the zombie film, and the directorial debut of its mightily-bearded lead, Jeremy Gardner. Made on a budget of \$6,000, it's a sometimes leisurely stroll through the post-apocalypse woodlands of the USA; a phlegmatic, pitch-perfectly soundtracked ode to Americana, companionship, and survival.

We put it to Gardner that it's primarily a character drama, with horror a secondary consideration. "It is certainly a fair assessment. The horror element of our film is for the most part on the fringe of what is essentially a character study, so I can understand it being billed as a drama first. Strangely though, there are a lot of places that have billed it as a comedy, which I do think is misleading. One of the things I am most proud of with the film is how funny it is, but the humour is an organic offshoot of just trying to create honest performances. I wouldn't want anyone to throw down their money expecting a laugh-riot like *Shaun Of The Dead*. Although I guess even calling it a zombie film could be misleading considering how often they are relegated to the background."

That's true – the zombies are an often unseen threat. Budgetary limitation, or was it always the plan? "A bit of both: the movie was always going to focus on the characters, but with more money and make-up and extras we would probably have had more zombies. And, in fact, we cut at least four featured zombies from the finished film mostly for execution reasons. In a way, the zombies ended up being like Bruce the shark in *Jaws* never working; we tried to have more of the zombies, we shot more of them, but for one reason or another, those scenes didn't work. Now we're getting maybe a bit more credit than we deserve for keeping them in the background."

We wonder how hard it's been promoting the film without the might of a studio publicity machine. "Very difficult. Lots of tweeting and begging respected sites to cover your film and then wading into the terrifying comment sections and being humble, approachable and engaged. That is something we have tried to cultivate from the beginning – this idea that we can be contacted and asked questions and be a part of the conversation. We aren't reclusive shadow people and we didn't make a perfect film, so write us, tweet at us, call us even, and tell us what you liked or didn't like or ask us how we did something." Indeed, some of the more candid phone responses can be found on the film's YouTube page.

Without giving too much away, the ending leaves a certain amount of manoeuvre for a sequel. Could that be on the cards? Gardner remains hopeful. "I have an idea for a sequel, and it would also work as a stand-alone movie. It would be called *The Orchard*. I have always envisioned it as the *Desperado* to *El Mariachi*; same character, same quirk of filmmaker personality, but bigger and slicker."

**"We aren't shadow people and we didn't make a perfect film, so write us, call us, tell us"**



Looks like a nice spot for lunch.



There's always someone bothering you when you're trying to rest.



Makes you wonder what fate they're trying to wash away...



Just your average stroll through the woods of America.



The real trouble with road trip/no showers.



## Zombies (2011)

Dir: David M Reynolds

Starring: David M Reynolds, Lauren Stein, Christopher Dane, Danny Drew

Available: [www.zombies.com](http://www.zombies.com)

Arguably more action thriller than straight-up horror, Realm Pictures' feature debut is an exhausting, taurine-fuelled blast that boasts a bewildering array of stunts, pyrotechnics, headshots, jets and even a motorbike chase. *Driving Miss Daisy* it ain't. Concerning a rescue quest by a renegade military outfit, the remarkably bombastic blend of cinematic swoops and frenetic editing brings to mind Danny Boyle's vision twinned with Michael Bay's ambition.

Shot on location in Dartmoor, home to the production team and director David M Reynolds, we wonder if he felt like scaling it back at any point during the process. "Ha! Quite the opposite in fact! The whole point of this project was to push ourselves to achieve far more than should be possible on an indie budget of £10k. We made a 'Rodriguez List' early on in production, which is basically a list of all the cool assets you have access to such as my motorbike, various airsoft guns, a quad bike, Dartmoor on our doorstep. This list informed a lot of the process even before the script was written. As for all the explosions, planes, turrets and other practical and physical effects – we just had a lot of fun figuring those things out from scratch!"

Zombie purists might want to look away for this next bit: the undead aggressors in this film are a land-speed-record-smashing kind of fast.



The hobbits didn't know what was about to hit them.

Image: © Realm Pictures

What was the idea behind that? "Firstly – if action is what you are going for (as opposed to drawn out tension) then fast zombies are clearly the weapon of choice. The fact that some of the hardcore horror audience would shun the film because of this really didn't enter into the decision, I mean really – they are just zombies!"

"Secondly – we wanted to reflect the numbing of the modern audience. Since the 1930s, zombies have been getting faster in direct

proportion to audience's tolerance for cinematic scares. Mainstream audiences have grown complacent, even numb to the slow, shambling undead – requiring an injection of adrenaline and fast zombies to get their fix. Our soldiers in the film are a unit trained to deal with slow zombies, but they have grown sloppy and complacent. We wanted to hit them with an unexpected dose of the fast zombie to mirror what the audiences have gone through since the good ol' Romero days."

## Zombie Women Of Satan (2010)

Dir: Warren Speed & Steve O'Brien (not the SFX writer of the same name)

Starring: Warren Speed, Victoria Hopkins, Victoria Broom, Seymour Mace

Available: Revolver Entertainment DVD / Netflix

With its motley crew of ribald circus freaks, vulgarity and surreal sidesteps, this is not your average undead movie. Imagine Rob Zombie's *House Of 1,000 Corpses* crossed with *The League Of Gentlemen* and you're halfway there: a joyously crass and utterly absurd micro-universe of the outlandish and perverse. Plus boobs. Lots of them.

For writer/director Warren Speed – who also plays priapic anti-hero Pervo the Clown – the film was a literal gamble: the funding came entirely from his life savings. "A huge risk, but you only

**"I've always loved writing weird stories and making a movie was a long-held ambition. I finally just decided to go for it"**

live once," he rationalises. As a live performer of burlesque, comedy and rock 'n' roll, what compelled him to venture into film production? "I've always loved writing weird stories and making a movie was a long-held ambition. I finally just decided to go for it."

Featuring scantily-clad and nude zombie women of improbable chest sizes being walloped with blunt instruments, it's fair to say that this probably isn't Germaine Greer's favourite film. Was extremity a conscious decision then? "I don't think

[the film] is extreme at all myself, I just wanted all the zombies to be sexy girls," retorts Speed. "Everything was meant to be taken humorously. It's not grim horror." Given the constipated dwarf and masturbation gags, we respectfully concur.

Various late night Horror Channel screenings have awarded it true cult status, much to Warren's delight. "Maybe dreams do come true!" A sequel, featuring *Big Brother*'s Pete Bennett and "loads of pretty zombie girls with boobs, blood and laughs galore" is due in early 2014.



It's like a brightly coloured *Reservoir Dogs*.



Zombies wanted. Big breasts and sloppy clothes not optional.

Image: © 24/25 Films, Growing Clown Entertainment



## Holdout (2012)

Dir: Calvin Sang

Starring: Rebekah Bray, Jeremy Tant, Philippa Stevens

Available: [www.calvinsang.com/YouTube](http://www.calvinsang.com/YouTube)

A Kiwi curveball that fuses a rock 'n' roll aesthetic with a distinctly dry sense of humour, *Holdout's* impressive prosthetics, swift action sequences and budget-belying slayings all make for a satisfying snack of zombiedom. Ultimately though, it's the sweet tale of companionship around which the carnage is crafted that makes it so commendable.

Director Calvin Sang is something of an indie scene grafter: having started making films at the age of nine, even he can't recall how many he's produced. With such a prolific resume, he was bound to stumble into the genre sooner or later. "After I had seen *Shaun Of The Dead* and *Zombieland*, I thought 'what the hell' and just went for it. I have friends that are good at make-up and blood and all that so there was really no excuse not to."

The minimal funding (approximately \$100) proved the biggest challenge in getting the film made. "Being the longest – and most ambitious – film that we had done, it wasn't something we could film over a weekend like we normally did. We had to do it in the school holidays, chunks at a time, over the span of a year. One time we had to delay filming for a few weeks because one of the leads cut his hair really short. That's the limitation of a zero/low budget film."

The convincing special effects, however, look anything but cash-starved; so just how

**"One time we had to delay filming for a few weeks because one of the leads cut his hair. That's the limitation of a low budget film"**

was such a high quality achieved on such a low budget? Explains Sang: "Computers and software are so powerful nowadays – it's kind of amazing what you can find people doing online, just in their spare time. I have some films that rely heavily on effects, like some action films on my

YouTube channel. And I have character driven films that don't have any effects at all. *Holdout* was a marriage of the two I guess. At the heart of it, it's about friends and isolation. But it's also a zombie movie, so it needs to have that kinetic, gory aspect to it as well."



Hockey sticks: good for sport, better for demolishing the living dead.

## Decay (2012)

Dir: Luke Thompson

Starring: Zolt Hetherell, Tom Procter, Stewart Martin-Haugh,

Sara Mahmoud, William P Martin

Available: [www.decayfilm.com](http://www.decayfilm.com)

Set and shot at CERN's Large Hadron Collider, *Decay's* science-gone-tits-up massacre was written, acted and produced entirely by PhD students. Director Luke Thompson conceived the project in CERN's belly of labyrinthine tunnels, surmising (correctly) that the location would be ideal for a creepy splatter-fest. Despite having no previous movie-making skills, he still managed to helm a 75-minute feature. "Some of us have dabbled with bits and pieces – our editor Burton DeWilde knew his way around editing software, for example – but we had no real filmmaking experience," he says.

A firm creative decision taken by the team was the inclusion of running, rather than shuffling, zombies. Associate Producer and Chief Zombologist (yes, really) Clara Nellist explains: "Ultimately it came down to the location and the decision that the first zombies came from the maintenance team. Since the tunnels are a restricted space, we needed our zombies to be threatening without blocking all escape routes."

Given *Decay's* unique setting, there's a fair amount of sciency stuff in the dialogue. Is any of it based in fact? "Everything in the film is based on real science," clarifies Thompson. "In the sense that we've used our scientific knowledge to ensure that everything is as utterly wrong as possible!"

Now the film's out there for public consumption, how's the feedback been? Braved comment threads and reviews? "Streaming has



Students in a lift are pretty good at playing... students in a lift.



Forget the flesh-eating zombie, is the angle of that hand making anyone else cringe?

been hugely successful," enthuses Thompson. "We're now approaching 2.5 million views. We seem to have polarised people – either 'Your film is bad or you should feel bad' (that's more polite than reality?) or 'I love this film! Please make a sequel!'

We're all massively proud of the film and how it's been received, but we're under no illusions it's perfect. But every single time we get a comment from someone saying how glad they are we made the film, it feels great."



## 2 Hours (2012)

Dir: Michael Ballif

Starring: Josh Merrill, Allen Bradford, Brooke Hemsath

Available: [www.indiegogo.com/projects/2-hours-independent-zombie-short](http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/2-hours-independent-zombie-short)

Sucking up festival awards like some kind of bloody trophy vacuum, *2 Hours* is a bleak short film centred around a bite victim swiftly succumbing to infection and the nightmares suffered therein. Creatively shot, with a recurring POV framework much like genre stablemate *Colin* (2008), it's raw, brutal, and somewhat poetic in tone.

We asked director Michael Ballif what he hoped to gain from utilising the first person perspective camerawork. "I wanted to show what it might feel like to become a zombie. This was actually the original inspiration that jump-started the writing process for the film. As the script evolved and the story began to flourish, it was quite apparent that we were going to need to cut to third person for the film to work. I'm just happy that we managed to integrate the POV perspective into a story that also has additional strong, cinematic moments. It's a great tool used to show the audience what it might feel like to become one of the infected. It literally puts you in the driver's seat of our main character, which I believe creates an opportunity for the audience to identify with the character in a unique way."

And how tricky was it to accomplish? "Surprisingly, a lot more challenging than I had anticipated. As the director, cinematographer, and camera man, it became very difficult at times to direct the screen action of the 'infected' while



Table manners like that will get you kicked out of IFC, you know.



We're really hoping this is from a cow or something, and not swiped from a morgue.

Images: © Michael Ballif

ensuring that that each performer stayed in frame where I wanted them to be. Additionally, because of the chaotic nature of the fast-paced action sequences we were shooting, it was highly difficult to pay attention to my actions, as one of the

performers in the scene. Most of these POV shots are longer takes, hoping to sell the full effect of the perspective. This makes it even more difficult to maintain precision. Fortunately, we had the third person cuts to save us in the edit."

## Theatre Of The Dead (2013)

Dir: Pat Gallagher

Starring: Emma Gleeson, Rob Baird, Kirsten Haussmann, Tim Sillis

Available: Coming soon..

"Strewth! Chuck us some more gore on the bonzer corpse pile mate!" A sentence you probably won't hear in this, Australia's scariest undead export since Nick Cave. A product of the Canberra Feature Film Coalition, it's been produced especially to pool the efforts of existing short film-makers and precocious first-timers. Concerning the monster-avoiding misadventures of a rehearsal-heavy

**"They're about putting people in a high-stress situation and playing out how it's dealt with. The zombies just happen to be the catalyst"**

theatre repertoire, it promises to finally answer the question all sane audience members ask when watching musical theatre, namely "why can't these people be eaten alive?"

As writer/director Pat Gallagher says of the zombie genre on the film's website: "They're about putting people in a massively high-stress situation and playing out how it's dealt with,

The zombies just happen to be the catalyst for this. And that's what I've tried to bring to *Theatre Of The Dead*."

The studio are still seeking international distribution and backing, so it's as yet unreleased, but the trailer promises some hefty, sustained Tom Savini-style levels of gut-munching and viscera. Curtains open late 2013. **F**



More or less terrifying than your average musical theatre troupe? You decide.



It's not enough to have a child, there's always teddy..



You might think you're a good shot, but remember - only headshots count.

Images: © Canberra Feature Film Coalition



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# MUSICAL

All-singing, all-dancing, part claymation – **Rosie Fletcher** revisits *The Happiness Of The Katakuris*, a horror musical that defies definition





**T**he first page of the script reads: "This is not like Hollywood, but rather a musical with Japanese folk songs and strange dances." Add in a sumo wrestler who shags his girlfriend (and himself) to death, a zombie chorus, a volcano, some elephants and Queen Elizabeth's nephew and you might begin to get a sense of the joyful anarchy that is *The Happiness Of The Katakuris*. This Japanese film, a comedy-musical-horror-drama from prolific maverick Takashi Miike, has been described as "*The Sound Of Music* meets *Down Of The Dead*" as well as "freakishly interesting", "incredibly weird", "deliriously bizarre" and "a feat of highly demented cinematic imagination."

The defining feature of Miike's movie is its refusal to be confined to any one genre or style. "I don't think about genre at all. My films are categorised as being in a certain type of genre. But myself, I don't make the movie thinking about which category the film belongs in," Miike asserts. "They ask 'is *Katakuris* a comedy, is it a family movie?' I don't have a feeling attached to a theme or genre. I'd rather just make something like 'hey, this is different.' When I shoot that way I'm curious to see what will happen. I'm interested to see what we can make and what we can do to change something." Even the tagline concurs: "Love. Music. Horror. Volcanos. Cinema was never meant to be like this!"

Shot on location in Kyoto in 2001, with interiors and CGI sequences filmed at Shochiku Studios, *The Happiness Of The Katakuris* sees four generations of one family living together in a guest house in the mountains. Patriarch Masao Katakuri (Kenji Sawada) has bought the property for him and his family to run after he's advised of plans to build a major road close by – the guest house should be packed to the rafters with tourists but instead the family haven't hosted a single guest. Becoming increasingly desperate due to the lack of custom, they're overjoyed when their luck seems to finally be changing and their first visitor arrives. Alas, this moment of optimism is swiftly shattered when their deeply depressed first customer is found dead the next morning, having killed himself. Terrified that reports of a suicide will jinx the guest house and worried that the death may have had something to do with his stockbroker turned petty thief son Masayuki (Shinji Takeda), Masao resolves to bury the body in the woods and keep schtum about the whole affair. And then the sumo wrestler and his girlfriend arrive and the dead won't stay buried...

### SEEN IT ALL BEFORE?

*The Happiness Of The Katakuris* is a loose remake of *The Quiet Family*, a 1998 horror comedy which was the feature debut of Korean director Kim Ji-woon (who went on to make *A Tale Of Two Sisters* and Arnie vehicle *The Last Stand*). It also starred Song Kang-ho (star of *The Host* and Park Chan-wook's *Thirst*) and Choi Min-sik (*Oldboy*'s Oh Dae-su) – all of whom were relative unknowns at the time. While *The Quiet Family* has a vein of satire and black humour, it does not have zombies and musical numbers.

Released in 2002, *The Happiness Of The Katakuris* is Miike's first and only musical to date. The thing is, it's not actually a very good musical, nor is it trying to be. "I never meant to make a great musical film. I didn't mean to impress the audience with the musical scenes," Miike laughs, recalling the different musical elements he's thrown in. Numbers range from a troubled man's





final lament, a big-band love song complete with multiple dancing extras and wine work, a synthy '80s pop track, a duet complete with sing-along karaoke score, a "Thriller"-style zombie romp and a catchy feel-good family ballad. Song and dance routines cut in at the most bizarre moments with the lyrics and melodies often discordant. And then there's the dancing.

"It was a sort of corner-cutting dance..." recalls Takeda – who's also the only one in the film that's actually any good at dancing. "The dance was choreographed on the spot and we tried very hard to learn it."

"I can't dance sophisticatedly in any way," concurs Sawada. "The harder I tried [...] the more I enjoyed it." Choreography was left in the hands of Ryohei Kondo, a contemporary dancer and founder of dance troupe The Condors. Kondo was given free reign by Miike and made up each routine on the spot – sometimes using multiple untrained backing performers to add to the scale and spectacle. The cast weren't given extensive training; instead they muddled along as best they could, delivering committed but unpolished

## “Although ‘Let’s Live Here Together’ is the message in the lyrics, the real theme is not living together literally but sharing the moment”

performances which only added to the comedy and lo-fi strangeness.

For Japanese audiences there's an extra dimension of humour and self-awareness in these sequences, thanks to the casting. Kiyoshiro Imawano plays Richard Sagawa, a con artist who convinces romance-obsessed single mother Shizue Katakuri (Naomi Nishida) that he's a British Secret Agent who's also in the Armed Forces as well as being the illegitimate nephew of Queen Elizabeth the Second and a former confidant of Princess Diana (phew!). In choosing Imawano alongside Kenji Sawada, Miike was casting two legends of the Japanese music scene. Imawano, who died in 2009 aged 58, was dubbed 'Japan's King Of Rock' and was the front man for highly successful band RC Succession. Sawada, meanwhile, was a former teen idol who gained the nickname "Julie" after his

love for Julie Andrews and led a band called The Tigers (who the Bee Gees wrote tracks for in the late '60s). "I needed experienced actors who had made their names in other fields," Miike explains. "Now they're at a point when they can look at their careers objectively and think 'how can I diversify?'"

"The audience would see us trying very hard," smiles Sawada. "All the cast doing their best to make the best film."

It's a sentiment fitting to the themes of the movie. Because underneath the outrageous strangeness, Miike is insistent he's made a feel-good flick. "It's an example of an ordinary family trying to do their best."

At the start of the film the Katakuris argue. Shizue has been through a divorce, her ex-husband having run off with a teenage girl. Her brother Masayuki is not long out of prison. Masao has been made redundant while the great-grandfather of the family (Tetsurō Tamba) is acutely aware of his age and mortality. It's only little Yurie, the youngest of the Katakuris, who can see from the start that there's something wonderful about the concept of the family unit – and hers in particular. As the body count racks up and the situation becomes increasingly fraught, a murderer stumbles into one of the fresh graves the Katakuris are digging and a nearby volcano threatens to erupt. It's only by confronting their past, via the decomposing corpses of the late hotel guests, that the Katakuri family can find resolution and peace. "Although 'Let's Live Here Together' is the message in the lyrics, the real theme is not living together literally but sharing the moment," Miike explains.

### THE MORE THE MERRIER

*The Happiness Of The Katakuris* is one of an impressive seven films released in 2001 directed by Miike, including his manga-based gorefest *Ichi The Killer* (considered one of his best) and deeply messed up family saga *Visitor Q*, which shares certain preoccupations with *Katakuris*. Miike puts his extraordinary output down to the Japanese film system and his genuine love of movies, saying he wouldn't be able to produce a similar volume in America, but it's clear he's a director who's desperate to try new things. 1999's *Audition*, arguably his masterpiece, is a similarly genre-defying film. Classed as a horror, for the first half it plays more like an austere melodrama about a widower falling in love again after the death of his first wife. "I'm not afraid of making mistakes. I'm okay with making a film that everybody talks shit about saying I can't be a director any longer. I can't be a director today just to keep being a director tomorrow. Like making a film with the fear of whether it'll be a big hit or not. I'd rather have a good time right now."

While a fascination with family – specifically the dysfunctional and unconventional kind – runs throughout his CV, Miike insists that if there's one thing an audience should take away from *The Katakuris*, it's a different attitude towards death. "My films don't represent death but there's always death in the background," he says. "Because it seems I'm afraid of death after all. Everyone is. Dying is scary. I wondered how I could make it any easier. If we changed the image or idea of death we'd be able to see our lives in a different colour."







**“It seems I’m afraid of death after all. Everyone is... If we changed the image or idea of death we’d be able to see our lives in a different colour”**

“I feel something strange at funerals. I think ‘Stop crying, it’s our turn next!’ How come everybody sees death as such a tragedy? The Katakuri smile at the death of [a family member – removed to avoid spoilers] and say ‘Good for you.’” Mülke’s zombies, then, are a reminder of our constant proximity to mortality. But by facing them (and dancing and singing with them...) the Katakuri are able to confront their mistakes and also their own inevitable expiration, and celebrate life rather than fearing death. It’s young Yurie’s willingness to engage with the zombies that facilitates a potential for redemption for the whole family. Clearly influenced by John Landis’ extraordinary video for Michael Jackson’s “Thriller”, these zombies have a keen sense of rhythm and style, with practical make-up effects emphasising their untimely demises.

Though the zombies are all live action, Katakuri mixes in animated sections with claymation versions of the Katakuri themselves, plus a bizarre, disgusting opening sequence where a woman finds a winged monster in her soup which takes a fancy to her heart-shaped uvula and rips it out, but gets picked apart by a hungry crow, who is then attacked by a sackcloth creature brought to life by one of the monster’s eyes. It’s a sequence showing the cycle of life in the weirdest, rankest way that gives the audience a sense of what to expect as the film progresses. Later on, scale models of the family, including dog Pochi,

wrestle with the erupting volcano engulfing the guest house. Mülke’s inspiration for the claymation scenes, which last six minutes in total, came from Czech filmmaker Jan Švankmajer – not beautiful idealised dolls but awkward, funny-looking simulacra. The culmination is an unpredictable, unfettered and endlessly imaginative feature that references popular culture but isn’t really like anything you’ve ever seen before. It’s not for everyone, and Mülke knows it.

“To try to think of what makes for entertainment is a very Japanese thing,” he says. “The people who think like this are old-fashioned. They think of the audience as a mass, but in fact every person in the audience is different. So entertainment for everyone doesn’t exist.”

Still, there’s so much going on, from the horror to the comedy, the songs and the dances, the love story, the dead rising and the positive influence of family, that the film offers something for all tastes while refusing to confine itself to any one niche. Whatever else you take from it, the “happiness” that the Katakuri are striving for seems to be infectious. For the family themselves, the most important thing – according to Mülke – is that “They look back upon their lives and smile.” At the very least audiences should look back at Mülke’s bold, beautiful, bizarre movie and do the same. **F**

*The Happiness Of The Katakuri is out now on DVD, distributed by Tartan Video Ltd*

## MUSIC MAYHEM

*Katakuri isn’t the only zombie musical out there, you know*

### POULTRYGEIST: NIGHT OF THE CHICKEN DEAD

2006 Director: Lloyd Kaufman

Undead zombie chickens besiege a fast food restaurant built on an Indian burial ground, where wimpy employee Arbie is trying to win back his ex-girlfriend who left him for another woman. *Poultrygeist* features songs such as “Revenge Is A Dish Best Served Fried” and is the most critically acclaimed Troma flick to date. According to *The New York Times*: “As perfect as a film predicated on the joys of projectile vomiting and explosive diarrhoea can be.”

### Z: A ZOMBIE MUSICAL

2006 Director: John McLean

Three nuns get bitten by a zombie infected pug... It might sound like the beginning of a joke, but it’s actually the opening of this bizarre B-movie exploitationer. Created by Texan indie director John McLean, the sisters get re-invented as naughty goths desperate to take their togs off. It’s trashy as all hell and in truly terrible taste, but does contain a range of original songs and dance routines.

### EVIL DEAD THE MUSICAL

2003 Writer: George Reinblatt

Okay, they’re not zombies, they’re Deadites, we know, yet this all-singing, all-dancing, all-gore-spurting theatre adap, which mashes together bits of all three of Raimi’s cult classics, still fits the bill. Five teens head to a cabin in the woods and unleash the undead, while Ash dishes out one-liners. The front three rows of the auditorium is known as “the splatter zone” for the soaking audiences can expect.

### THRILLER

1983 Director: John Landis

*An American Werewolf In London* director John Landis’s 13-minute video for Michael Jackson’s seminal song invented the zombie musical and has become the most watched music vid of all time. It’s got a voiceover by Vincent Price, make-up FX by *American Werewolf* man Rick Baker, a film within a film within a dream and Jacko turning into a werewolf and a zombie. Revolutionised music vids, re-invented the undead.







# NAZI ZOMBIES

The *Outpost* saga is one of the most successful current franchises. Will Salmon chats to director Kieran Parker...

**F**ilmed in Scotland on a budget that would struggle to cover the entering on a Hollywood movie, 2007's *Outpost* was a triumph of skill and bloody-minded determination. Directed by Steve Barker and produced by Arabella Croft and Kieran Parker of Black Camel Pictures, it was a loving homage to both John Carpenter and the Nazi zombie sub-genre as well as films like 1977's *Shock Waves*. A sequel, *Outpost: Black Sun*, followed last year, and a third instalment in the series (actually a prequel), *Rise Of The Spetsnaz*, is released at the end of October – now directed by Parker. We caught up with him to find out more about the latest film.

**Tell us a little about how the *Outpost* series got started...**

Well to rewind time, Steve Barker and I met at

art school in 1990. He and I had always wanted to make features. My producer (and wife) Arabella and I discussed what film we wanted to make. It was a quick decision to get involved with action horror because we loved those kind of films.

Steve wanted to make a haunted house, John Carpenter-esque film and, as a result, *Outpost* was born. The first film did incredibly well. Then we shot *Outpost 2* in 2011 and we built these huge stages. While we were shooting, Arabella said, "let's think about keeping these sets up and making a third film." Just as we were finishing *Outpost 2* we went to script on *Outpost 3*.

The huge benefit with *Outpost 3* is that the sets were already built and I knew Rae Brunton, the writer, very well. We spent many hours discussing the successes and the failures of both films. So when it came to a third film, I knew what we needed to deliver.

**Just how influenced were you by previous Nazi zombie films?**

When Steve and I did *Outpost* there weren't that many films around that had the Nazi zombie thing going on. We looked at the seventies ones – specifically *Shock Waves* – but the references for *Outpost 3* were *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, and the design of 1950s/1960s Hollywood war movies.

**Why change a successful formula and make this an all-out war movie, rather than another horror?**

Making things different from the previous two films was one of the first decisions we made. It's very easy to go back and retread old ground. We saw in the first and second films how these zombies get made, so I just figured that we didn't need to bother with any of that this time. I just wanted to add a little bit of spice to it, a new ingredient. And if you haven't seen the first film,



Real explosions: definitely the way to go.



I wanted it to be a film that someone could just pick up off the shelf.

***It's certainly action-packed...***

I know the audience for this kind of film; I know what they like, I'm sure there are more horrific films, but as a war movie with a bit of horror in there, I think it's delivered. If the reference movie for the first film would have been *Alien*, the third film is more *Where Eagles Dare* or *Cross Of Iron*. It would have been the easiest thing in the world to retread things and I think, selfishly, as the director, you've got to make things stand out as much as they can for your own film.

***What was the atmosphere like on set?***

It was fun. It was a tough shoot – it's a very ambitious film to do in five weeks, with five actors going through a bunker with firearms. So it was stressful, but for me it was a huge benefit to know the project inside out, to be one of the first people on the project. We used a lot of the same crew [as *Outpost 2*] and we were based in Scotland. To have guys on board who understood the film and the constraints of the film and the type of film we were making meant there was a lot less work for me to do as a director, explaining things to people. I was comfortable because I was surrounded by people I'd worked with before, and respect.

***How was the casting process?***

Bryan Larkin [the film's lead, Dolokhov] had been up for a role in *Outpost 2* and it didn't work out, which he was gutted about. When it came to the third film I'd essentially written the story with Rae with Bryan in my head. He spent two or three months putting on a lot of weight, all the bulk that you see in Dolokhov, which you don't get with actors on low budget movies, unless you have early conversations. So we spent a lot of time hanging out, a lot of time in prep, I showed him loads of films that I wanted him to watch.

And hats off to Michael McKell (Strasser) who I loved working with. He really got the role that he needed to play. That whole kind of camp, but also barking mad, insane thing. He was just



Do zombies take showers?  
They should, we think.

**“To have guys on board who understood the film and the constraints and the type of film we were making meant a lot less work for me as director”**



You can see why he sticks  
to the shadows.



## N IS FOR NAZI ZOMBIES

brilliant to work with, he absolutely got it. My only direction to him was to channel his inner Al Pacino, and go from quiet to very big, very quickly. He just nailed it. As did Bryan, as did the rest of the cast.

*A lot of the effects in the films were created practically. Did that make things more difficult? Would it have been more cost-effective to go CG?*  
I'm from the old school. I appreciate the digital aspect of things – it makes things fast and cheaper – but I don't think the synthetic approach works all the time. I liken it to the difference between CDs and vinyl; people still love vinyl because it's got the dust on it, it's got that gritty approach to it. And I think if you're doing a combat movie, an action movie, I think physical effects are so much more real, so much grittier. I didn't want to turn around and say, "we can fix it in post." I wanted it to have that live physical feel to it.

*All the gunfire is real, isn't it?*

There are one or two moments in the film where we had to replace the firearms with a gun effect, but 99 per cent of the film is all physical firearms. There's a certain adrenaline that gets going whenever someone hands you a loaded gun, albeit with blanks. It generates an exciting mood on set and the actors really get into it, I think it's where the performance really comes through. You get an extra 30 per cent out of the actors because they love it. It's the same with squibs, bullet hits, and sparks, all that stuff. It's a genuine pain when you're shooting, because of the amount of time it takes. I can show you hours of outtakes where they don't go off and all that kind of stuff, but I think that's a real success in the movie and I certainly wouldn't change it if we did it again, or going forward.

*Are you a zombie fan outside the Outpost series?*  
Absolutely. I love action horror movies. I think Zack Snyder's *Dawn Of The Dead* was an absolute classic. I love the *28 Days Later* films. I like zombies that run. I'm not a huge fan of zombies that stagger. I love *Dead Snow*... I don't necessarily go for the kitsch, comedic side of things, I need to see my gore content before I can start laughing, but it does work well with Romero, because there's enough balance. But I need my zombies to run!



What you can't see are the stockings and suspender he's been wearing.

**"I don't necessarily go for the kitsch, comedic side of things, I need to see my gore content before I can start laughing"**

*Are any plans in motion for a fourth Outpost?*


Well, never say never... I think we've got an interesting storyline for a fourth movie, it's just when we would fit it in diary wise, because we've got plenty of other stuff going on. I'd love to have another crack at it. We'll see if people enjoy the third film.

I very much wanted to make a film that people would engage with. There's nothing worse than seeing a film you have high expectations for, but which doesn't deliver what you wanted. It was very much a decision on my behalf to make a film that I would enjoy and that wouldn't pretend to be anything else. I think with a sufficiently high body count and gore and a hard as nails leading man, I don't think you can say that it's not delivering.

*What are you working on next?*

We've got several projects on the go. We've just done a film with Andrew McDonald from *28 Days*

Later called *Sunshine On Leith*, which I was one of the producers on, as was Arabella. We produced that with DNA, so that's coming out in October and getting a theatrical release. We're doing some TV stuff, which will be out quite soon. As far as directing is concerned, I'm working on a thriller set in the Scottish highlands called *Breed*, which is an action-packed chase movie. It's very exciting. Fingers crossed that will shoot at some point next year. Basically, take an *Outpost* movie, add a bigger budget and some helicopters and you've got *Breed* – with added zombies.

I very much want to continue in that kind of mould; I think when you make your first film you've got to set out your stall as to what you intend to do further down the line. I'm very proud of *Outpost 3*, and of the franchise. 

*Outpost 3: Rise Of The Spetsnaz* will be out towards the end of October on DVD and Video On Demand.



This was going to be the end of a long weekend.



# NAZI ZOMBIES: THE LOWDOWN

The horror! Our guide to six of the best (and worst) Third Reich flicks...

## REVENGE OF THE ZOMBIES

1943 Director: Steve Sekely

Rating: ★★★★★

A young John Carradine plays mad scientist Dr Max Heinrich von Altermann in this, the earliest known Nazi zombie film. The grieving scientist uses his skills to resurrect his dead wife Lila – and then to create an army of the dead for Hitler. Released while World War 2 was still raging, the Nazis were easy “go-to” bad guys in everything from TV to superhero comics. At just over an hour long, *Revenge* is a slight affair, and unlikely to trouble even the gentlest of souls’ dreams.

**The zombies:** Not particularly scary. They can talk, and don’t really attack anyone in the film. Deeply unimpressive.  
**Alternative titles:** *The Corpse Vanished*; *A Vingança dos Zombies*



## SHOCK WAVES

1977 Director: Ken Wiederhorn

Rating: ★★★★★

John Carradine returned to the genre some 34 years later in a far more impressive offering that properly kick-started the Nazi zombie sub-genre. Rose, the only survivor of a diving expedition gone wrong, tells the eerie tale of her encounter with the Death Corps – a group of soggy Nazi soldiers who were experimented on to become deadly aquatic zombies. Not a great deal happens, but Peter Cushing is predictably wonderful as an SS officer haunted by the ghosts (or, er, zombies) of his past.

**The zombies:** Be-goggled and menacing, the Death Corps are genuinely eerie figures.  
**Alternative titles:** *Almost Human*; *Death Corps*



## OASIS OF THE ZOMBIES

1982 Director: Jess Franco

Rating: ★★★★★

This flaccid tale of treasure hunters who have a run in with the living dead is a dull, ploddy effort, low on the trashy verve that Franco usually brought to his movies. On the plus side, the desert setting looks good, and there’s a hilariously leery prologue where two bra-less beauties stumble across Third Reich artifacts. Subtlety was never your strong point, was it Jess?

**The zombies:** A bunch of Afrika Korps undead. If there were zombie top trumps these would get points for rarity.  
**Alternative titles:** *L'Abîme Des Morts-Vivants* (translation: *The Abyss Of The Living Dead*); *Bloodsucking Nazi Zombies*; *The Treasure Of The Living Dead*



## OUTPOST

2007 Director: Steve Barker

Rating: ★★★★★

A squad of mercenaries are escorting a businessman through Eastern Europe when they stumble upon an old outpost (the clue is in the title) containing Nazi relics... Bad things follow. *Outpost* makes the most of its low budget and wins the viewer over with a mixture of decent characterisation and haunted house chills. It’s a slow build, but the zombies themselves are effectively scary. *Outpost 2: Black Sun* followed in 2012, while the prequel, *Rise Of The Spetsnaz*, moves the series into war movie territory.

**The zombies:** Tough and brutal Nazi super-soldiers. There’s very little that’s camp or funny about these guys.  
**Alternative titles:** None



## DEAD SNOW

2009 Director: Tommy Wirkola

Rating: ★★★★★

The best known of the recent Nazi zombie films, this Norwegian horror comedy unexpectedly gathered steam becoming something of a cult hit. Director Tommy Wirkola takes a similar tonal approach to *Shaun Of The Dead*, keeping things admirably straight-faced while also being genuinely hilarious in places. Plus, there are some wonderfully gruesome kills that Peter Jackson would have been proud to include in *Braindead*.

**The zombies:** The boots, the armbands, the works. There’s no doubting that these guys are full on Nazi bastards – and pretty scary too, with great make-up.  
**Alternative titles:** *Død snø*



## ZOMBIES OF WAR

2006 Directors: Peter John Ross,

John Whitney Rating: ★★★★★

Dreadful title, dreadful film. Nazi zombies created by your typical mad scientist rub shoulders with a slightly shonky werewolf in this low-budget paranormal war movie. Having no money doesn’t automatically make it a bad film, of course. No, it’s the terrible acting, crushingly tedious plot and underuse of the zombies themselves that do that. In fairness, this was originally titled *Horrors Of War* (downplaying the zombie aspect) so maybe it’s the marketing that’s to blame.

**The zombies:** Ignore the DVD cover art – there are only a couple of the blighters in the film and they’re not hugely scary.  
**Alternative titles:** *Horrors Of War*



**ALSO SEE  
ZOMBIE LAKE  
ON PAGE 33**





# ORIGINS

Sarah Dobbs investigates the various tried-and-tested ways of creating your own zombie army

**W**ant to build your very own army of the undead? Always dreaming of the day the deceased finally rise so you can spend your days perfecting headshots and scavenging for food instead of working at your crappy job? Zombie movies have the answer.

Several of them, in fact. Broadly speaking, the movies suggest there are two ways to create a zombie: using science, or using magic. Within those categories, though, there are any number of weird and wonderful variations. The origins of the living dead in the movies range from the almost believably scientific to the improbably bonkers.

So if you fancy kickstarting the apocalypse, grab your lab coat and a handful of magic herbs and let's get started. Here are 13 ways to make a zombie, according to the movies...

## Use voodoo, as in *White Zombie* (1932)

**What you'll need:** Some esoteric ingredients and a Voodoo for Dummies guide.

**Chances of success:** It's a method that's been around for centuries, so it's about as tried-and-tested as you're going to get.

**How it works:** In arguably the first ever zombie movie, voodoo master Murder Legendre used arcane potions to create mindless slaves to run his sugar mill. While he didn't share his exact recipe, chances are Legendre used traditional zombie powder ingredients like human remains, ground glass, herbs, and a pinch of tetrodotoxin - a kind of neurotoxin derived from puffer fish.

Once a victim has ingested the mixture, they'll go into a kind of trance, and will accept whatever instructions they're given without complaint. Ideal, if you need someone to tackle those menial tasks around the house you never quite get round to.

If you are intending to become an evil voodoo master, though, it's probably best not to broadcast your intentions by naming yourself something like "Murder Legendre". Not exactly subtle, is it?

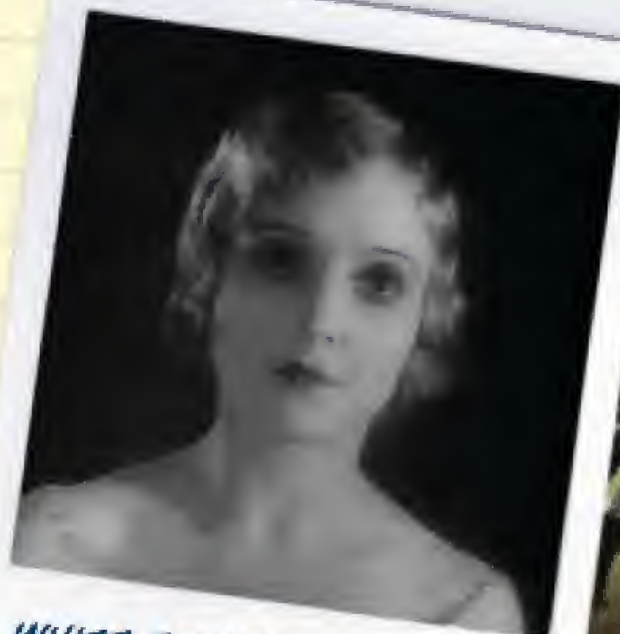
## Create a virus, as in *Resident Evil* (2002)

**What you'll need:** An enormous top secret underground laboratory staffed by hundreds of morally bankrupt scientists.

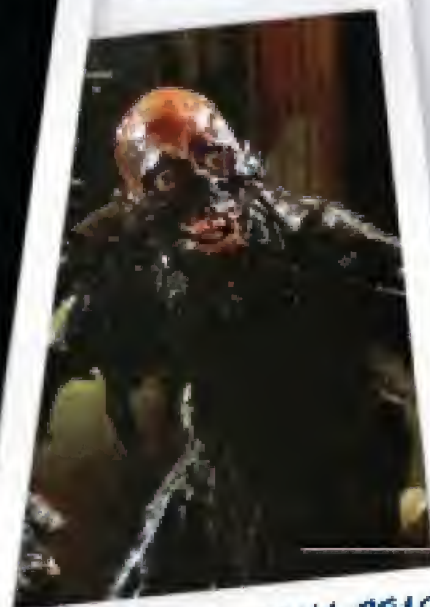
**Chances of success:** Slim to none. It's just not going to happen.

**How it works:** You'll need the resources of a giant international conglomerate at your disposal if you want to copy the way zombies were created in *Resident Evil*. The Umbrella Corporation, a massively profitable pharmaceutical company, created the T-virus as part of an effort to cure a non-specified degenerative disease. The problem was, it worked too well. Rather than just regenerating dying cells, it reanimated the dead. It also spread incredibly quickly from one infected person to the next, and could even cross species boundaries.

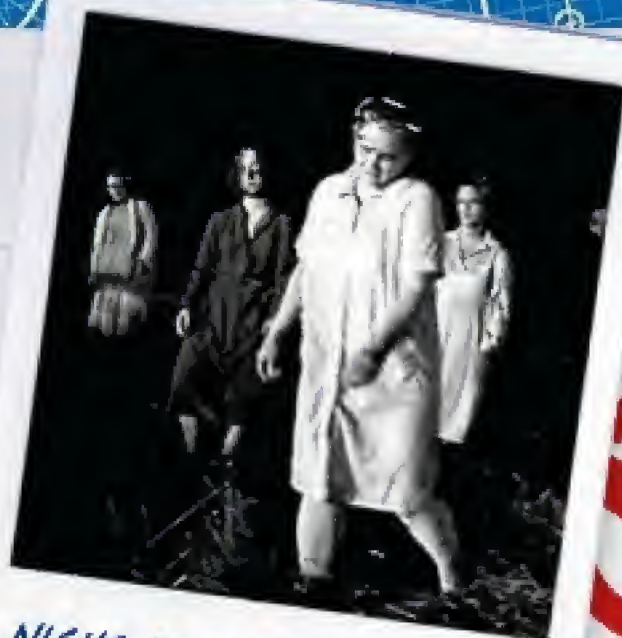
Though it'd be an efficient zombie-making method if you could get it to work, actually doing research and development on that scale would take a hell of a lot of time, effort and money. Even considering the various amazing things modern medicine can do, reanimating the dead still seems a little way off.



WHITE ZOMBIE







NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

### Use extra-terrestrial pathogens, as in *Night Of The Living Dead* (1968)

**What you'll need:** Something that's been to space, preferably Venus.

**Chances of success:** Unless you know someone at NASA, it's not looking good.

**How it works:** It's never actually confirmed in either *Night Of The Living Dead* nor any of its sequels (*Dawn Of The Dead*, *Day Of The Dead*, *Land Of The Dead*, *Diary Of The Dead* and *Survival Of The Dead*) how the zombies actually came into being. But there are enough hints that we can guess - it looks like a mysterious space virus is to blame.

The source of the alien pathogens (or possibly extra-terrestrial radiation) is a NASA satellite, which has been brought back down to Earth after orbiting Venus. Whatever it encountered out there in space is enough to cause the dead to rise. Quite how it works isn't clear, but if you're not bothered about the exact mechanisms, you could maybe give this a go. The only problem is getting hold of something that's been in space long enough to get infected; moon rocks probably won't cut it.

### Steal a secret military experiment, as in *The Return Of The Living Dead* (1985)

**What you'll need:** Access to military secrets. And for the military to be developing a project that creates zombies in the first place.

**Chances of success:** According to the movies, the military does stuff like this all the time, so maybe not too shabby.

**How it works:** Written by *Night Of The Living Dead* co-writer John A Russo, this film suggests that the zombie outbreak in *Night* was actually the result of a military experiment gone wrong. Having created a toxin that reanimates the dead, the US government sealed it all up in barrels and attempted to dump it in landfill, but the barrels end up sitting in a medical supply warehouse. Inevitably, someone opens one of them, unleashing both the zombie-making gas and a gooey reanimated corpse, causing another outbreak.

If you have to start from scratch, developing something like 2-4-5 trioxin won't be easy, but maybe some top secret military laboratory has already started work on it? After all, the US really did create and use Agent Orange, so anything's possible.

### Mutate a virus, as in *28 Days Later* (2002)

**What you'll need:** Access to a laboratory, ideally one specialising in virology and animal testing.

**Chances of success:** Using an existing virus and scrapping the need to make the dead walk makes this a slightly more realistic possibility.

**How it works:** Like the *Resident Evil* method, the *28 Days Later* way also requires some scientific know-how. The twist here is that the zombie-making virus doesn't need to be able to bring the dead back to life, because these zombies aren't actually dead. They're just infected.

The so-called Rage virus is a kind of modified version of Ebola, mixed with neurochemicals that induce uncontrollable anger. Apparently, extremely angry people are almost indistinguishable from the living dead, except that they run faster and aren't as preoccupied with brains. This virus is also really, really infectious - all it takes is a single drop of infected blood and you're a goner.

This is the kind of method you'll only want to use if you're determined to cause the downfall of civilisation, since rage zombies are absolutely useless at housework, and can't really be persuaded to do anything except run around killing people.

### Find cursed Nazi gold, as in *Dead Snow* (2009)

**What you'll need:** A metal detector, a spade, and some fairly in-depth knowledge of the strategies used by the Germans in World War II. Plus a hefty dose of luck.

**Chances of success:** Almost fool-proof, assuming you can find the treasure in the first place.

**How it works:** Absolutely no scientific or magical expertise is needed for this one: to summon Nazi zombies, all you have to do is find a cache of cursed Nazi gold, and steal it. It doesn't even have to be a massive amount of treasure: according to the movie, a single gold coin should be enough to attract the vengeful corpses of former SS officers. The only tricky part is finding the gold in the first place, so do your research and try to find some obscure European village that was occupied by the Germans during the war - then get digging.

Once you've found your gold, try giving it away to people you don't like and let the undead take care of your enemies. Make sure to keep a chainsaw handy, though, just in case you need to defend yourself in the process.

TOP SECRET



SHOPPING LIST

ICE CREAM  
BEER  
SPADE  
TOXIC WASTE  
TELEVISION (CURSED)  
VIRUS  
MAP OF NAZI GOLD  
MOON ROCKS  
VOODOO STUFF  
COMBINE HARVESTER  
PLANS TO TOP SECRET BASE  
MILK  
BREAD  
BAKED BEAN

Watch a magic TV, as in *The Video Dead* (1987)

**What you'll need:** A cursed television set.

**Chances of success:** Scour eBay and Gumtree long enough and you can probably find anything, so maybe not too bad.

**How it works:** This is another method that depends more on finding a magical artefact than actually doing any magic yourself. The *Video Dead* features a cursed television that, when switched on, only shows one thing: a black and white horror movie called *Zombie Blood Nightmare*. The TV also has some pretty impressive 3D capabilities, because if it's left on long enough, the zombies climb out of the screen and into reality.

These zombies are easier to handle than most, because they only attack when they sense someone's scared of them. The rest of the time, they're happy to just hang out and drink tea. That should make your life considerably easier, should you be able to find the TV in question. In the movie, it's an old CRT telly, which was on its way to the Institute for Paranormal Research. Maybe give them a ring and see if they've still got it.



REC 2

Summon a demon, as in *REC 2* (2009)

**What you'll need:** A corrupt priest, or at least a working knowledge of Christianity and the mechanics of an exorcism.

**Chances of success:** History is cluttered with accounts of young girls being possessed by the devil. If even one of them turns out to be true, you're quite in.

**How it works:** The first *REC* film didn't really make it clear why people were turning into zombies, but the sequel offers more of an explanation. They're not infected. They're possessed. Patient Zero, in this scenario, was a young girl who was horribly mistreated by priests and ended up possessed by a demon.

When one of the priests experiments with her blood by injecting it into rats, he unwittingly starts an outbreak of, um, demonic zombies. It's daft, but no dafter than some of the other methods on this list; the Bible's full of people dying and coming back to life, after all. It might be tricky to replicate, though, since literature on the subject of demonic possession tends to focus on getting demons out of people, not putting them in. Maybe try an exorcism, but backwards.

Hand out contaminated beer and ice cream, as in *Wasting Away* (2007)

**What you'll need:** Beer, ice cream and a discarded barrel of toxic waste. That last one is likely to be the most important.

**Chances of success:** Probably pretty good, depending on your marketing strategy.

**How it works:** Here's another potentially effective delivery system for your zombie-making toxins: beer. In *Wasting Away*, the employees of a bowling alley decide to make beer-flavoured ice cream by emptying the contents of a beer barrel into the Mr Whippy machine. Unfortunately for them, the beer was contaminated with a kind of radioactive serum – another government science project gone wrong – and the concoction turned them into the walking dead.

It's worth mentioning that although, in this instance, none of the kids noticed that their beer was green and luminescent, people are generally reluctant to consume neon food. If you're going this route, maybe try marketing it as a limited edition brew or something, to allay suspicion.

Offer around recreational drugs, as in *Return Of The Living Dead 5: Rave To The Grave* (2005)

**What you'll need:** Access to military secrets, again.

**Chances of success:** Considering people apparently take bath salts and methamphetamine, it's not beyond the realms of possibility that they'd willingly take a zombie drug – assuming one could be synthesised.

**How it works:** The anti-drugs lobby would have you believe that taking recreational drugs will turn you into a mindless zombie. And in this sequel, that's literally true. Using the contents of those barrels of toxic waste the military still hasn't managed to properly dispose of, a bunch of enterprising students create Ecstasy-like pills and start selling them around campus. Unsurprisingly, taking "2" turns pleasure-seekers into, um, zombies.

This method uses the same chemical as the first *Return Of The Living Dead* film, but in a far more convenient format that actually tempts people to infect themselves. It's a much easier way to spread the infection than relying on bites, or trying to get people to inhale the gases from barrels marked "toxic waste", that's for sure.



**CLASSIFIED  
TOP SECRET**

Use experimental agricultural equipment, as in *The Living Dead At Manchester Morgue* (1974)

**What you'll need:** Access to farming machinery. And corpses.

**Chances of success:** Not amazing, to be honest. **How it works:** With an increasingly unpredictable climate and an ever-growing population, farmers are always looking for new ways to improve and increase their crops. And, if you're lucky, some of those ways will turn out to accidentally reanimate the dead.

In *The Living Dead At Manchester Morgue* (also known as *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie*), an experimental machine designed to make pests kill one another does just that. The ultra-sonic radiation that was supposed to stop insects from eating valuable crops does something to the brains of both corpses and babies, causing them to become aggressive and bitey. It's another method that requires both expertise and resources to pull off, but also another way that someone else might research for you, if you're really lucky. You could also maybe see if other similar technology has a similar effect; maybe ultrasonic welding equipment could wake the dead? It's worth a shot.

Just let it happen, as in *World War Z* (2013)

**What you'll need:** Patience. Access to some kind of rolling news channel, and a subscription to a newspaper with decent coverage of global health news wouldn't go amiss, either.

**Chances of success:** Around 50/50.

**How it works:** No explanation is given for the virus that turns people into zombies in *World War Z*. But maybe no explanation is needed. After all, how do you explain SARS, AIDS, H5N1, or even the common cold?

Despite dire warnings, the recent outbreaks of both swine flu and bird flu didn't end up sweeping the globe and killing us all, but who's to say the next predicted pandemic won't actually happen? *World War Z* compared the zombie virus to rabies, which is a very real and very infectious disease. So maybe, if we keep going the way we are, overusing antibiotics and creating superbugs, eventually some kind of zombie virus will just spontaneously appear. The obvious advantage to this approach is that it doesn't require you to actually do anything. You just have to wait. **W**

Visit a cursed graveyard, as in *Dellamorte Dellamore* (1994)

**What you'll need:** An ancient graveyard with mystical powers. Probably a spade, too. **Chances of success:** Pretty good, assuming you can find an appropriate cursed burial ground.

**How it works:** In this quirky Italian zombie movie (known as *Cemetery Man* in the US), anyone buried in one particular graveyard reanimates, and has to be killed and re-buried by the long-suffering cemetery caretaker. To start a zombie apocalypse, all you'd need to do is find the graveyard, and help some of the zombies escape before they're put down again permanently.

There's a Latin inscription reading "RESURRECTVHIS" above the front gates, which may be a warning or an incantation – but either way, it makes the graveyard easier to find. If not, maybe try figuring out where the Forest of Resurrection is. Versus might be, or track down the animal graveyard from *Pet Sematary* (it's probably somewhere in Maine).



MANCHESTER MORGUE



DELLAMORTE





# PLAGUE OF THE ZOMBIES

Hammer time! Will Salmon looks back at the horror studio's sole brush with the walking dead...

**J**ust two years before Romero revolutionised the zombie movie with *Night Of The Living Dead*, horror house Hammer unleashed *The Plague Of The Zombies*. But despite it only being a gap of a few years, it feels like it could have been decades. Sure, *Night* was shot in cheapo black and white, and

*Plague* in glorious colour, but it's clear which one is a modernist classic – and it ain't *Plague*.

But we come not to bury *The Plague Of The Zombies* (if you'll pardon the pun), but to celebrate it. Sure, it's old fashioned and mired in recycled Hammer tropes (the starchy rationalist hero, the evil aristocrat, the heaving bosoms), the plot doesn't make a huge amount of sense and the zombies' best scene is, rather disappointingly, a dream sequence. But it's also wonderfully atmospheric, beautifully filmed and highly entertaining.

## UNLEASHING THE PLAGUE

The first script for *The Plague Of The Zombies* (then titled *Horror Of The Zombies*) was written in 1962 by Peter Bryan and submitted to Universal the following year. Additional work was done on the script by producer Anthony Hinds, but it wasn't until the summer of 1965 that it entered production (July 28th to be precise), directed by John Gilling – one of the final films in an impressive career that included hits like *The Pirates Of Blood River* and *The Shadow Of The Cat*, both for Hammer.

Gilling had an, er, formidable reputation and something of a temper, by all accounts. Having been displeased with the tinkering his screenplay for Hammer's *The Gorgon* had received, he insisted on control of the script.

*The Plague Of The Zombies* was shot as part of a four-film package, and back-to-back with *The Reptile*, which Gilling also directed. It shared several cast members with that film, as well as a Cornish setting. For that reason, the film was eventually screened with the already completed

*Dracula: Prince Of Darkness*, to avoid audiences noticing the similarities.

The film's cast included several well-known names. André Morell took the part of the heroic Sir James Forbes, a somewhat grumpy but resolute

And *The Pit*, and brought a strong sense of earthy morality to the film.

Opposite Morell was a fantastically icy John Carson as the evil Squire Clive Hamilton. Stern of voice and commanding of gaze, Hamilton is the film's dark heart, and Carson is wonderful in the role.

Bringing an innocence to the film (if hardly stellar acting skills) was Diane Clare as Forbes' daughter, Sylvia. According to Jacqueline Pearce (*Blake's 7*'s Servalan, in her first major film role), Clare and Morell didn't get on, with Morell making little effort to hide his dislike.

The film was primarily shot at Hammer's beloved Bray Studios, and sprawled over all four stages and the back lot. Location work was also done at Black Park in Buckinghamshire, Chatham Common, Frensham Ponds in Surrey and Oakley Court in Berkshire.

## WORKING IN THE TIN MINE...

It's a funny old film, *The Plague Of The Zombies*. You could make valid arguments about its lack of pace, minimal use of zombies and dumb motivation for its villain (SPOILER ALERT: Hamilton has raised the dead so that – dun dun durr! – they can work in his tin mine). But that would be missing the charm of the film. Yeah, it's a slow-burner, but it's also absolutely steeped in a creepy atmosphere. Hamilton's plot may seem prosaic and illogical – why wouldn't he just hire a work force from the village? – but when have you ever known the aristocracy to be giving with their money? It ties into the often-stated idea that the zombie is a metaphorical monster. Hamilton is a staunch capitalist, willing to sacrifice the poor for his own financial benefit. Sure, taking it literally, it doesn't quite stand up, but in its own spooky way, it's making a fairly direct comment about both class and race. Hamilton is a white man exploiting Haitian culture for his own petty means.

It's also full of some surprisingly dark and adult moments. Poor Dr Thompson (played




figure who is gradually drawn into the mystery surrounding a tiny Cornish village. Morell was already well known for playing Dr Watson in Hammer's 1959 adaptation of *The Hound Of The Baskervilles*, and for taking the title role in the BBC's classic science-fiction serial, *Quatermass*





"Why, what a big one you've got there."

by Brook Williams) has to look on as Forbes decapitates his zombie wife. Sylvia is tossed from one baddy to another, in a scene that is clearly leading up to a gang rape, until she is rescued – a scene that was heavily criticised by the BBFC. The voodoo-style zombies may not be quite as threatening as Romero's flesh-munching monsters, but they're an eerie lot – especially in the inexplicable moments when they laugh, chillingly. It's also worth noting just how effective Roy Ashton's make-up is. The DVD and Blu-ray releases may have drawn attention to some of the joins, but these are still scary monsters, and certainly more effective than the vast majority of their contemporaries.

*The Plague Of The Zombies* might not be one of Hammer's big pictures, but it sits comfortably in their second tier of underrated classics alongside the likes of *Straight On Till Morning*, *The Nanny*, *Fear In The Night* and *Quatermass And The Pit*. It's a classy horror film. Sure, it didn't revolutionise the genre in the way that *Night Of The Living Dead* did, but as a late entry in the voodoo zombie sub-genre it's smart, effective and highly entertaining. 



This is exactly what happens if you stay up too late, kids.

## WHO DO VOODOO?

Voodoo was the original source of zombie troubles, as these films demonstrate...

### WHITE ZOMBIE (1932)

A Bela Lugosi classic. The zombies here aren't dead at all, but people in the grip of a drug and the influence of the evil – and subdy named – Murder Legendre.

### KING OF THE ZOMBIES (1941)

An interesting curio, this one. These are traditional voodoo zombies, but with the added twist that they are said to eat human flesh – some 27 years before *Night Of The Living Dead*.

### I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE (1943)

Great title, great movie. On the island of St Sebastian, nurse Betsy Connell encounters voodoo rites – though how much is real is pleasingly ambiguous. A remake is currently on the cards.

### THE DEAD ONE (1961)

A comically bad zombie flick that relocates the voodoo zombie to Louisiana. The "dead one" is Jonas, long-haired slave to his mistress, Monica. Terrible dialogue is just one of its problems.

### THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW (1988)

A rare post-Romero voodoo zombie tale directed by *A Nightmare On Elm Street*'s Wes Craven. Loosely based on a true story, this is creepy stuff – even if Bill Pullman isn't the most charismatic lead.



Zombies are the obvious choice to man a tin mine, really.





# QUARANTINE (AND THE [REC] SERIES)

*SFX* gets ready to zoom into a zombie apocalypse unlike any other... By Calum Waddell

**T**ake the shaky-cam scares of such hit horror flicks as the infamous Italian oddity *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980) and the low budget snafu *The Blair Witch Project* (1999). Then add the corpse-crunching carnage of Lucio Fulci and George Romero. The end result is the Spanish shocker *[REC]*, a foreign frightener that seemed to appear from nowhere and scared the pants off horror-hounds from every corner of the planet. Released to widespread acclaim in 2007, and making Romero's similarly-shot *Diary Of The Dead* look decidedly toothless in comparison, *[REC]* was the most creative terror title to emerge from the land of flamenco and fun in the sun since the heyday of Jess Franco and Amando De Ossorio.

Prior to *[REC]*, directors Jaume Balagueró and Paco Plaza had been driving forces in the rising tides of Mediterranean macabre. Both had been star players with their country's Filmmax production outfit – the genre house behind Balagueró's intriguing offerings *The Nameless* (1999) and *Darlowss* (2002) and Plaza's maudlin monster-mash, *Romasanta: The Werewolf Hunt* (2004). With *[REC]*, however, the two filmmakers forced Hollywood to sit up and take notice as never before: within a year of its release an American variant was released, entitled *Quarantine*.

Talk about a quick turnaround.

"We had no input into *Quarantine*," laughs Plaza when *SFX* catches up with him. "We actually found out about it on the internet. One day I was surfing the web and I read that they were going

to remake *[REC]* in America. I said to Jaume, 'Do you know anything about this?' And he told me he had no idea [laughs]. So we called our producers at Filmmax and they told us that they had sold the rights. We went on location to where they were shooting *Quarantine* and the cast and crew were very polite to us. The producers took us out to dinner but that was as far as the process went. But I have still never watched it."

In the original *[REC]* news reporter Ángela Vidal (Manuela Velasco) and her cameraman Pablo (Pablo Rosso) document the outbreak of a living dead disaster in an apartment block that is quickly cordoned-off by local authorities. With no way of escaping, the survivors band together to battle an

army of fast-moving blood-spewing, undead ogres that, with one bite or scratch, can immediately spread their infection. As Ángela and Pablo make it through the night they gradually move up to the top floor of the overrun building and discover that possession by a supernatural entity is behind the macabre metamorphosis taking place among the residents. In a final, freaky coda, an oversized ghoul pulls *[REC]*'s heroine to her (presumed) doom.

the first. This is why it is about the paranormal and about being possessed – we didn't want anyone saying it was about zombies any more. Like a lot of horror fans I am a huge fan of *The Exorcist*. It is a great movie, a great novel and a great classic. It proved to be a fountain of inspiration to *[REC] 2*."

Balagueró concurs, adding that it was never his intention for *[REC]* to be viewed as an account of walking-carcase creepiness...  
"I felt that at the end of the first *[REC]* we made it clear that the infected people were possessed," he says. "There are little clues in there – you just need to watch closely. We really wanted to make people aware that there was more to this and that the story was about demons and not zombies."

**"All we ever wanted to do was make the most terrifying movie possible. The origins of *[REC]* were just chats about what would scare us"**

army of fast-moving blood-spewing, undead ogres that, with one bite or scratch, can immediately spread their infection. As Ángela and Pablo make it through the night they gradually move up to the top floor of the overrun building and discover that possession by a supernatural entity is behind the macabre metamorphosis taking place among the residents. In a final, freaky coda, an oversized ghoul pulls *[REC]*'s heroine to her (presumed) doom.

## GENRE-BUSTING?

Received, and marketed, as a zombie film, *[REC]* actually belongs to a sub-genre within the trend that focuses on infection rather than grave-straddling shambling corpses. Either way, *[REC]* proved to be the most intense and unpredictable entry in flesh-feasting lore since Romero's *Day Of The Dead* hit screens in 1985.

And make no mistake: that is high praise.

"The first film was not a zombie movie – people just saw it that way," argues Plaza. "We set out to do a movie about infected people and, in the sequel, to explain the origin of that infection. In the first movie we came up with some possible causes – we indicated it could be demonic possession. In *[REC] 2* we wanted to go even further in this direction and make a more fantastical movie than

Indeed, having (whether they wanted to or not) made a movie that follows in the footsteps of Fulci and Romero, Balagueró and Plaza opted for a U-turn with *[REC] 2* (2009). In the interim, *Quarantine* had proved a relative success at the international box office – thanks to the amount of subtitle-phobic fear-fans that still, unfortunately, exist. Whilst most recent horror remakes at least try and do something different, the most curious aspect of *Quarantine* is how similar it is to the original template – to the point that anyone who has already seen *[REC]* is likely to lose interest quite quickly.

## TAMING THE BEAST WITHIN

That said, in comparison to *[REC] 2*, *Quarantine* is a masterpiece. Alas, the Spanish sequel is more schlock than shock thanks to the decision to evoke Catholic dogma and reduce the tension of the first film into one big, long Biblical burp – in which the seemingly indestructible screen denizens are revealed to be easily tamed: just produce a crucifix, a few New Testament passages and some holy water. Ultimately, the line between atheist and ordained is going to make all the difference in regards to whether or not *[REC] 2* plays out as camp or creepy...

## RATED RECORDINGS

**[REC] (2007)** Rating: ★★★★★

**[REC] 2 (2010)** Rating: ★★★★★

**[REC] 3: GENESIS (2012)** Rating: ★★★★★

**QUARANTINE (2008)** Rating: ★★★★★

**QUARANTINE 2 (2011)** Rating: ★★★★★



"I do not know if you have to believe in God and the Devil to enjoy the film," ponders Plaza. "I think that because of films like *The Omen* and *The Exorcist*, audiences all around the world are in touch with religious icons like the crucifix and demons and so on. I think it is very easy to identify with that. I am a Catholic but I do not think you necessarily need to be one to be frightened by *[REC] 2*. However, if you are a believer then it probably will help you enjoy it more [laughs]."

Obviously aware that this might not play out so well in more secular societies, the makers of *Quarantine 2* (2011) opted for a breakaway story in which the zombie-plague infests an aeroplane on a late night domestic journey, and then an airport. Despite debuting on DVD, and boasting comparatively cheap production values, this sequel-to-a-fairly-redundant-remake is surprisingly sprightly – with some inspired plasma-spillage, a couple of solid jump-scares and likeable characters. In dropping the found-footage aspect of the franchise, *Quarantine 2* also anticipates the action of *[REC] 3: Genesis* (2012)...

### ONCE MORE, WITH FEELING

"It was a challenge to keep everything fresh," maintains Balagueró. "So we decided to make one more *[REC]* movie each – I am directing the fourth one and Paco did *Genesis*. With the third and fourth movies we agreed that we could not push the format of shaky video recordings any further. We enjoyed experimenting with this in *[REC]* and *[REC] 2* but after doing the sequel we wanted to do something different."

Set in the midst of a wedding reception, which takes place concurrent to the events of the first film, *[REC] 3* is another disappointment – diluting the jolts of the original outing even further and largely playing the plot for laughs. After the usual viral violence takes hold, there is an amusing aside in which the matrimonial videographer is told to turn his camera off (an acknowledgement of the far-fetched concept that anyone would film such freak events in the first place) but, other than this, little in *[REC] 3* is inspired. Leading lady Leticia Dolera, playing an especially brutalised bride, makes for a sexy "scream queen" heroine but her role quickly amounts to little more than faux-female empowerment. Sure, she gets to rev up a chainsaw and mow down some marauders, but only whilst flaunting her flesh and looking like a clichéd icon of Goth-chic.

Nevertheless, by the time *[REC] 3* comes to an end, the scene has been set for another sequel...

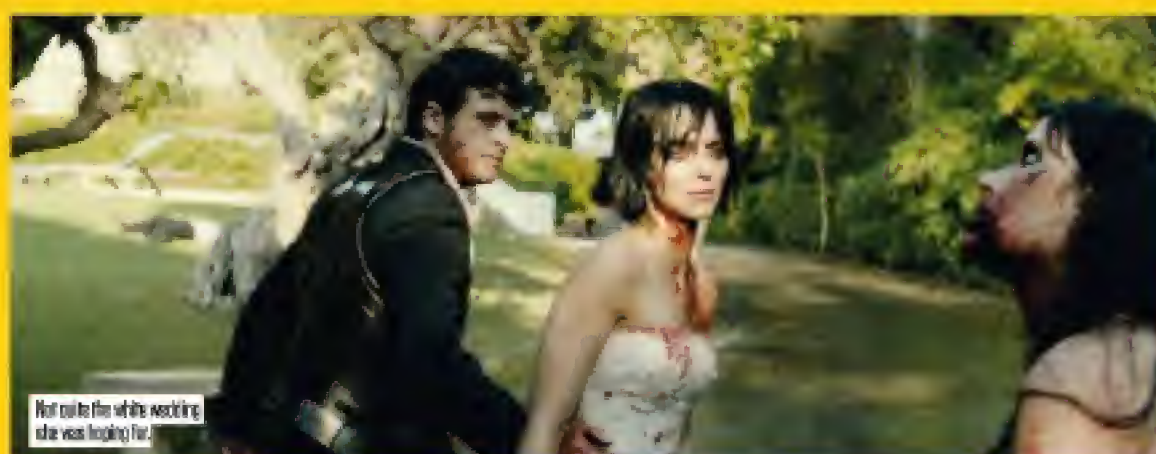
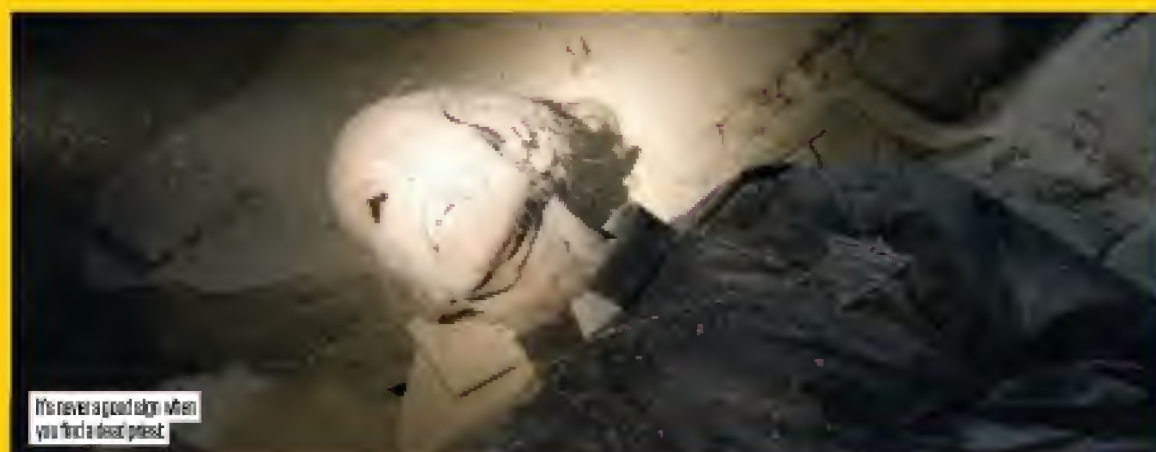
"*[REC] 4* will be the last one," reveals Balagueró. "The full title is *[REC] 4: Apocalypse* and it will continue the story of Ángela Vidal. It brings everything to a conclusion. As with *[REC] 3* we finally have the action taking place outside of an apartment. It is a lot of fun to expand this universe."

Unbelievably, when it makes its world premiere at the 2013 Sitges Film Festival this October, *[REC] 4* will mark the sixth movie – in just seven years – to appear in this most unlikely of horror movie mythologies.

Whether or not one regards the fast-moving monsters of the various *[REC]* instalments to be "infected", "possessed" or just plain old zombies, one thing is for sure – these bombastic Barcelona-born chillers have left a permeable paw-print on splatter cinema.

"All we ever wanted to do was make the most terrifying movie possible," concludes Balagueró. "The origins of *[REC]* were just me and Paco – talking about what would scare us."

Thanks for the nightmares, guys. 







FROM  
THE SFX  
ARCHIVES

# ROMERO

In 2005 – with *Land Of The Dead* about to be released –  
Ian Berriman spoke to the undead legend himself

**M**eeting George Romero is kinda intimidating. Not because he's a scary fella – dear me, no. You couldn't hope to meet a nicer guy. It's partly because he invented the zombie genre as we know it (George introduced the vital element of flesh-eating). It's also an instinctive human reaction to the man's towering presence – the director stands about 6' 5" tall. He's a giant in both senses of the word.

After several years off the radar, Romero is back in the spotlight thanks to the fourth entry in his *Dead* saga, *Land Of The Dead*. It's merely the latest leg of a journey that began in 1967, when Romero was knocking out ads for toilet cleaner and washing powder in his native Pittsburgh.

"I'd always been passionate about film, and we started a production company that did commercials, industrial films and the like. So we had the equipment and we said, 'Why don't we try to make a real movie?'"

The result was the horror classic *Night Of The Living Dead*, a bleak tale about the dead inexplicably rising from their graves and besieging

an isolated farmhouse. One can't help imagining what would have happened if George and his buddies had made a different film. Is there an alternative universe somewhere where George Romero isn't synonymous with zombies?

"Oh I'm sure there is somewhere out there! The first film we tried to make was not a horror film. It was this very high-minded, almost Bergmanesque thing, a sort of coming-of-age movie, medieval period. And no one understood what we were trying to do! So we said, 'Well, why don't we try something that's more commercial?'"

*Night* was shot on the cheap using whatever resources Romero and his pals could beg or borrow, in between commercial jobs.

"It was a labour of love. We had no money and we were relying on the kindness of strangers. We didn't know we were up against impossible odds. Had we, we might not have been as bold!"

The main location, for example, was a farmhouse awaiting demolition, which had no running water. After 18 hour shoots, Romero slept on site to protect the camera equipment.

"It was real guerrilla stuff, living in that farmhouse and thinking up the next scene. And we

finished it entirely in Pittsburgh. In those days the news was on film, so cities the size of Pittsburgh had film labs. So we literally finished the film at home, threw it in the trunk of the car and drove it to New York." George grins at the memory of his youthful naivety. "Just babes in the woods! We just had no idea what we were getting into!"

Over the years, *Night* has accrued a lot of serious-minded academic readings. Strikingly, the film has a black hero, Ben. He's often interpreted as representing the Civil Rights movement.

"Well, Duane Jones [who played Ben] just happened to be an African-American. He was the best actor from among our friends, so we said, 'Duane, you do it!', and all we did was not change the script. And I'm not sure that was right! I think we probably should have referenced it. I think we missed a theme there, which is that sometimes an individual in a minority might see things more clearly in some ways, but in other ways a bit more harshly, and maybe over-react, so I'm not even sure that that was correct."

Which isn't to say that *Night Of The Living Dead* wasn't concerned with any big ideas...

"In our minds we were making a film that was about revolution. At night we would just sit around and bullshit, and of course we noticed the idea of the destruction of the family unit, and the idea of revolution. We were all pissed off. We all thought the '60s were gonna change everything – and of course they didn't. So a lot of that stuff

**"The first film we tried to make was not a horror film. It was very high-minded, and no one understood what we were trying to do!"**







**“I’m not very optimistic – I don’t like the odds! It’s who you hang out with, isn’t it? That’s all you can do, pick your buddies”**



probably crept in subconsciously. But basically, we were trying to make a horror film, a thrill ride!"

In 1978 Romero followed up *Night* with *Dawn Of The Dead*, which sees a group of survivors taking refuge in a shopping mall, where they discover that this all-you-can-take paradise is merely a gilded cage. The film's anti-consumerist message has made it equally popular with academics. Does it amuse George that people write PhDs about his zombie films?

"It doesn't make me laugh – in a way it's very flattering! In the first film it wasn't so conscious; none of the other ones that I've done have been quite as innocent. I decided somewhere along the way, during *Dawn Of The Dead*, 'Man, I might

as well be way up front with it!' So then people wrote about 'the hidden messages in *Dawn Of The Dead*...' George roars with comedy exasperation. "They're not hidden! They're in your face! Still, people thought it was somewhere underneath. I mean... God, how in your face could it be? Holing up in a shopping mall? Come on, guys!"

George doesn't see his zombie films as social criticism or satire.

"They're more snapshots, it's 'this is my impression of what's going on now', and trying to put it into the films thematically, into the story. And at the same time, stylistically – *Dawn Of The Dead* looks like *Saturday Night Fever*!"

Hang on, does it? We don't remember any undead guys strutting their stuff in wing-collared white suits. You missed a trick there, George. You should have put some dancing zombies in it!

"We should have done! But we didn't. We had a pie fight, though!"

The third entry in the saga, 1985's *Day Of The Dead*, was Romero's snapshot of the Reagan era. It's set in an underground military bunker, where a group of scientists spend their time bickering with a group of homicidal soldiers. It's probably Romero's bleakest vision of humanity.

"It was all about mistrust developing, mistrust not only in institutions but in each other, which seemed to me what was happening then. People losing faith in not only the government, the military, education, but losing faith in each other. It was the beginning of that erosion – y'know, every man for himself!"

All three films seem deeply cynical about human nature. In the face of the zombie threat, instead of cooperating, people invariably argue amongst themselves and turn against one another. So is Romero one of life's pessimists?

"I don't know, man! No, I'm not very optimistic. I don't like the odds! I kinda remain optimistic, but I think it comes down to personal choice – it's who you hang out with isn't it? That's really about all you can do, pick your buddies. You

can't pick your place of birth", he smiles wryly, "or your President, really!"

Romero spent most of the last decade attached to a succession of projects that never got greenlit. Between 1993's *The Dark Half* and *Land Of The Dead*, he got one film made – 2000's *Bruiser*. And that went straight to video. While he was away, though, the box office success of zombie flicks made his name a "hot brand" again. Which led to the film Romero devotees had been waiting for for two decades: *Land Of The Dead*, a snapshot of the post-9/11 landscape.

"It's not just post-9/11," George corrects. "I think it goes from August 2001 to the Iraq war. When I originally wrote the first draft it was much more about homeland problems – homelessness and AIDS and ignoring the problem. Then 9/11 happened and nobody wanted to touch it, so I just put it away for a while."

In *Land Of The Dead*, a pocket of humanity survives protected on all sides by fences and water. A privileged few live in a gleaming skyscraper.

"It's about that whole period, immediately before 9/11: feeling safe – protected by water. And then the water gets breached – that's there. We made the tower a little taller..."

Some images that survived from the first draft have acquired extra meaning since Iraq, like the scenes of an armoured truck, "Dead Reckoning", cutting a bloody swathe through the zombie 'hood.

"The truck was in the original script, images of this armoured vehicle going through a little village mowing people down, then wondering why they're pissed off! That resonated more after we'd seen the footage on CNN..."

The most interesting thing about *Land Of The Dead* is that George's zombies are evolving. They learn to use weapons, and band together under a leader, who seems to feel concern for his fellow zombies. It seems like a radical reinvention, but George insists that it's no big deal.

"I was trying to do that even in *Dawn*, even just through the wardrobe – to give them some

## RATING THE DEAD

### NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD (1968)

Rating: ★★★★★

You already know this one. *Night Of The Living Dead* is simply a masterpiece. Crafted on a minimal budget at the fag end of the '60s, it changed the shape of horror cinema forever. But above all else, it's just a damn scary movie.

### DAWN OF THE DEAD (1978)

Rating: ★★★★★

Romero does it again with a film that's arguably superior to *Night*. The gore is ramped up, as is the humour, but it's the expert skewering of consumer culture that makes it stand out. A masterpiece, not just of genre cinema, but of filmmaking in general.

### DAY OF THE DEAD (1985)

Rating: ★★★★★

Romero's personal favourite. *Day* may not have the purity of *Night*, or the wit of *Dawn*, but it's by far the grimmest and most nihilistic of the hexalogy. Bub the zombie provides a degree of comic relief, but he also cuts a tragic figure in a film full of human cruelty.

### LAND OF THE DEAD (2005)

Rating: ★★★★★

King George returns after 20 years away from the dead, with a heavy-handed but satisfying action movie. *Land* is clearly a product of paranoid post-9/11 America, but it remains an interesting and genuinely exciting film.

### DIARY OF THE DEAD (2008)

Rating: ★★★★★

The rot sets in. *Diary* ditches the mythology of the first four movies and is set in the early days of the outbreak. The documentary style allows for pot-shots at YouTube culture and the internet. Unfortunately, it feels clumsy and weirdly reactionary.

### SURVIVAL OF THE DEAD (2009)

Rating: ★★★★★

Oh dear. If *Survival Of The Dead* had been made by any other director, it would have been derided and forgotten. Coming from George Romero, it's crushingly disappointing. The comedy is ill-advised, the characters unlikeable and the scares entirely absent.

Will Salmon







Cynical, politically relevant... and full of gore.

## “People wrote about ‘the hidden messages in *Dawn Of The Dead*...’ They’re not hidden! They’re in your face! Come on, guys!”

character and create that empathy for them. At the end of *Dawn* there’s a guy that’s been dragging around a gun, and he grabs another gun and decides that’s better – so that’s a little bit of choice.”

And *Day Of The Dead*’s starring zombie was Bub, who’d been trained to perform simple tasks.

“Bub was pretty evolved. Bub was imitating a human’s behaviour, so I thought the next step was to have other zombies imitating a zombie.”

Romero’s zombie films always have an African American hero, but in this film, he isn’t a human – he’s a zombie called Big Daddy.

“I thought, ‘If I switch that, well maybe people will understand more clearly that I’m sympathising with these guys now.’ And basically, I always have been!”

The ending of *Land* is surprisingly open-ended. The heroes live to fight another day; and the lead zombies live to bite another day, too. Has George got sentimental in his old age? Nah, he was just thinking ahead.

“Two things were on my mind: ‘What if this is a big hit and they want another one right away?

I’d better leave this open-ended!’ I was thinking that I’ll just do part two of the same story, because I don’t have anything else to talk about, politically – so I’ll just follow the truck or follow the zombies. And if I never got to make another one, I wanted to end on the idea that the only way that this is ever gonna resolve is some sort of a *détente* – we gotta leave each other alone, or this is never gonna end. So I wanted to put a little bit of that in there, just in case I get hit by a cab or something!”

Whatever does happen next for George (and we sincerely hope it’s not getting crushed under the wheels of a taxi) it seems like his career is finally back on track after all those years mired in the Development Hell quagmire. His next project could be an adaptation of Stephen King’s *From A Buick 8*. Or it could be, “this new script I’m writing, which there seems to be some interest in.” Or it could be another zombie film. If that’s the path he takes, what can we expect?

“I figure that if I have to do it quickly, it’ll probably be about *Dead Reckoning*. It’ll get a flat tyre or something in a very bad place!” **F**

## LAWS OF THE DEAD

Can you have zombie hamsters or not? Only Romero knows...

*Do you have set rules about how zombies behave? I mean, how fast is too fast?*

Oh, well, definitely the *Dawn Of The Dead* remake is too fast as far as I’m concerned!

*So is it like Olympic walking – do they have to keep one foot on the ground?*

Yeah, something like that! My joke is, “My guys’ll take out library cards before they join health spas!” I’d rather develop them mentally.

*Just how intelligent can they get?*

I’m not quite sure how far to go with it. I don’t wanna do *The Omega Man*, where they really have a society. I don’t know if I wanna go that far – I’d rather keep them a little distant, so that maybe there’s some potential there. I don’t want them to be instantly dominant that way. It’s tough to know quite how far to go with it, so I’m still wrestling with that a bit. But they do have to learn to eat something else!

*And aren’t they all gonna disintegrate eventually? The humans should lock themselves inside until they rot to bits!*

Yeah, that’s an issue that nobody seems to bring up! Why aren’t their noses falling off?

*Whatever the cause of the zombie outbreak is, does it just affect humans? Or are there zombie cats? Zombie hamsters?*

That’s another one that I haven’t touched! Originally in *Land Of The Dead* I had written a scene where there were zombie rats, and I was spared having to deal with it because it just became too expensive! So I took it out, happily, because I didn’t know if I wanted to broach that or not. There are a lot of things like that where if you stop and think you go... “Wait a minute!”



One of the more sympathetic zombies – he’ll eat you, though.





# SUPERHEROES

What happens when Earth's mightiest superheroes face the zombie hordes? **Cavan Scott** chats to *Ex-Heroes* author Peter Clines

Once they were heroes, costumed adventurers who defended Los Angeles from the forces of darkness. Then the zombie plague hit, wiping civilisation as we knew it from the face of the earth. The City of Angels became a City of the Undead. A year after the fall of mankind, the superheroes – The Mighty Dragon, Scalph, Gorgon, Regenerator, Cerberus and Zzzap – struggle to be symbols of hope, leading the survivors from their fortified base, a former film studio now known as the Mound.

*Ex-Heroes*, Peter Clines' tale of superheroes versus zombies, was first released in 2010 by US publisher Permuted Press. Three years on it has spawned three sequels and a major deal that sees the series republished by Crown in the US and Del Rey Books on this side of the pond.

"*Ex-Heroes* and its sequel *Ex-Patriots* had built up a good fan base," explains Clines, "and

**"After watching *Land Of The Lost* I had huge recurring nightmares about a puppet T-Rex trying to break into my bedroom"**

I was approached by agent David Fugate. To be honest, I told him I didn't need an agent, but he said he believed in the books so much he'd work on them for free to show what he could do." Fugate took them to Crown, who were looking for a Comic-Con-friendly novel, and the publisher snapped them up. The fourth book in the series, *Ex-Purgatory*, is published in October in the UK and January 2014 in the States.

## MARVEL BOY

Unsurprisingly, Clines is a self-proclaimed life-long superhero devotee. Growing up in Maine, New England, the highlight of his week was a visit to the comic store. "I was a gigantic comics fan. I

had piles and piles of them." In fact, when he was 10 years old, Clines' family moved to a new house and he was forced to part with the majority of his collection. "Within two or three years, I'd just filled the piles back up again," he remembers.

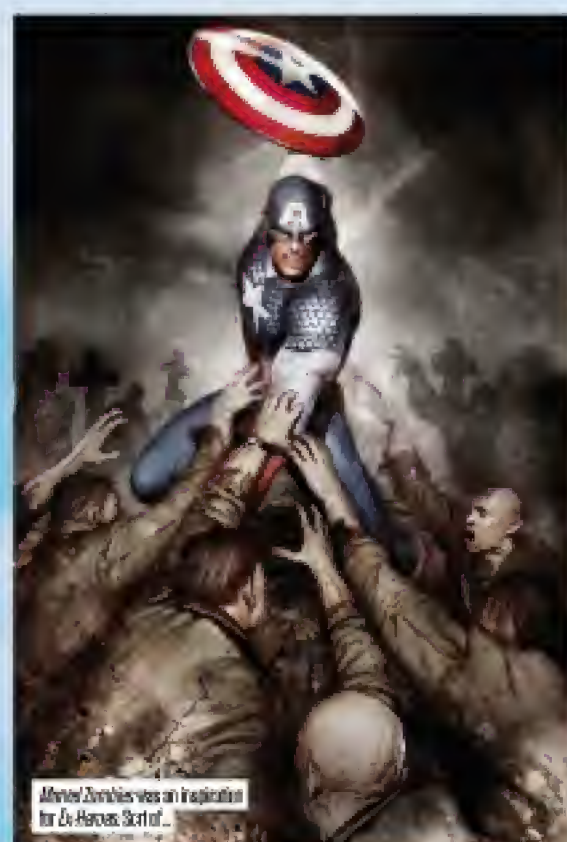
So what was the young comic-addict's flavour of choice – the House of Ideas or their Distinguished Competition? "Oh it was mostly Marvel," Clines admits. "I had a huge *Spider-Man* collection, starting from when I was 10." He would continue to buy the wall-crawling title for the next 30 years. "It was only four or five years ago when *Spider-Man* sold his soul to the devil to bring Aunt May back to life that I thought screw this, I'm done with Spidey."

What was it that attracted Clines to the Mighty World of Marvel? "Marvel was a little more optimistic overall," the author explains. "Even when Peter Parker screwed up and didn't catch the villain, there was always a hope that things were getting better. The Marvel Universe always seemed a little brighter. Unfortunately, I don't think that holds any more. Marvel has now beaten DC for having the darkest, most depressing worldview there is."

Of course Marvel hasn't always been sweetness and light, either. In the 1970s, Stan Lee's publisher powerhouse was churning out more than its fair share of graphic horror comics, from *The Tomb Of Dracula* series to, appropriately enough, *Tales Of The Zombie*. Did these black and white shockers kick off Clines' love of the undead?

"Actually no," Clines says. "Horror comics kind of vanished in America when I was a kid. There were still a couple like *House Of Mystery* from DC, but they weren't as big as before." Not that Clines was a big horror fan anyway. "To be honest I was terrified of everything," he admits. "My imagination was too active."

The first horror comics he read belonged to his uncle, and included an adaptation of *The Picture Of Dorian Grey*. "It gave me nightmares



*Marvel Zombies* was an inspiration for *Ex-Heroes* Scott.



Watching *Hellraiser* for the first time was a defining moment for Clines.



for weeks! Then there was *Land Of The Lost*, a show with little puppets. I had huge recurring nightmares about a puppet T-Rex trying to break into my bedroom."

## MONSTER MASH

The only thing that didn't seem to break young Master Clines into a cold sweat was a TV series that prides itself in sending children running behind the sofa. "I loved *Doctor Who*," he enthuses. "I grew up in the middle of the Tom Baker era, which had some really creepy stuff, like the gigantic Krynoid plant monsters and the Fendahl, a great big Lovecraftian leech. Weirdly, I just didn't perceive it as horror. I thought of *Doctor Who* more like *Godzilla* movies. You don't think of those as horror films although in retrospect the whole idea of *Godzilla* marching through your city is horrifying. It was only later, when I became a horror junkie, that I looked back at *Doctor Who* and thought, hey, there's a lot of terrifying stuff in there."

Clines' turning point came at college when a friend made him watch *Hellraiser*. As the closing credits rolled, Clines was hooked and has been a dyed-in-the-blood horror fanatic ever since. It was only later, after a move to Hollywood and a successful career as a prop man, scriptwriter and journalist that Clines decided to combine his love of heroes in spandex with his new-found passion for the living dead. And it was all Marvel's fault...

## DEAD DISAPPOINTING

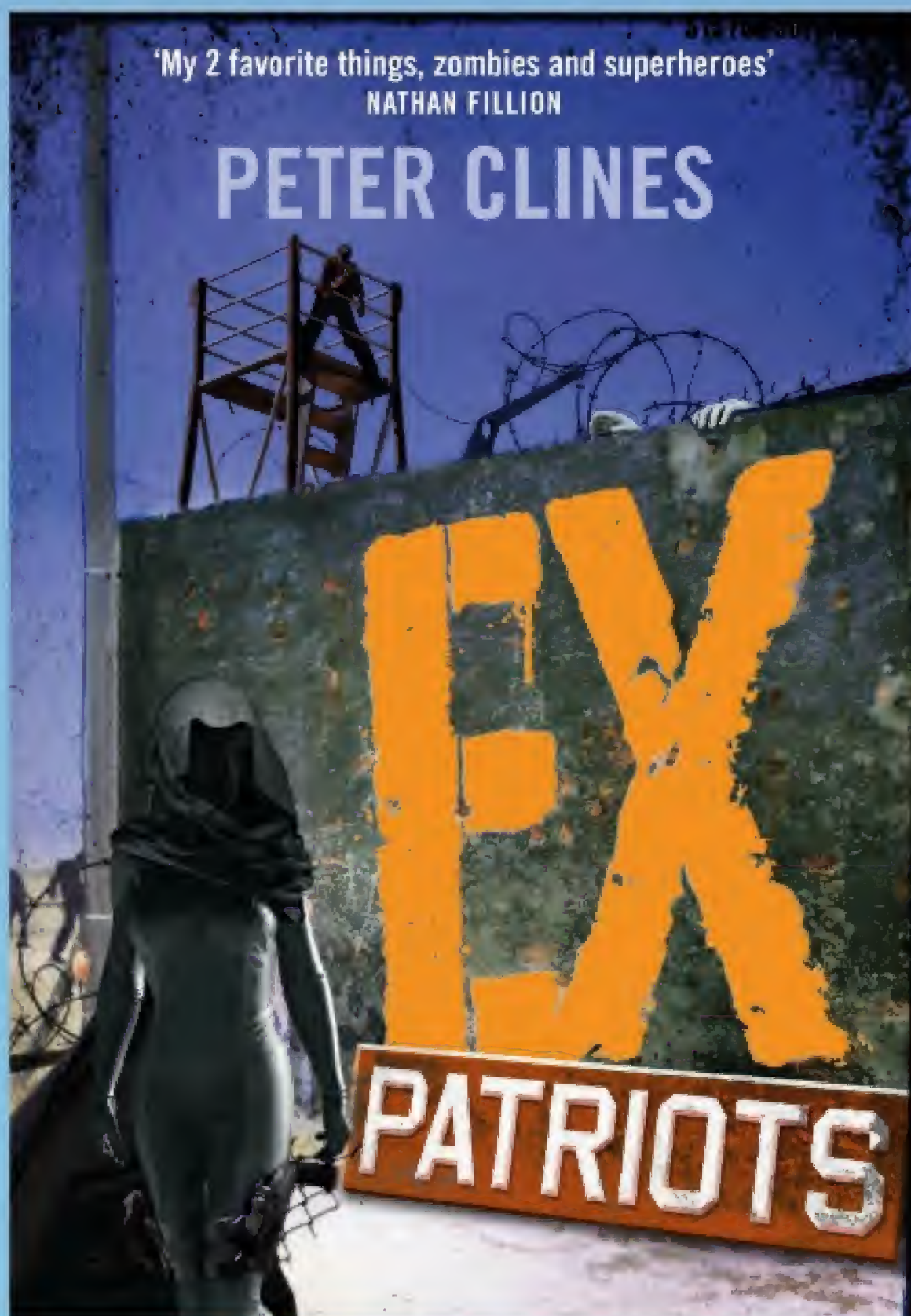
"In 2005 Marvel announced that they were bringing out *Marvel Zombies*," Clines recalls, "advertising it as a full George Romero-style zombie apocalypse within the Marvel Universe. I thought it was going to be fantastic, a great opportunity for the kind of heroism and bravery that you just don't get in Marvel comics anymore."

However, the comic book proved to be a disappointment for this particular long-term Marvelite. "I know lots of people love *Marvel Zombies*, but it felt like a huge waste of opportunity to me," Clines shares. The book wasn't the zombies versus superheroes tale that Clines had been expecting. The superheroes themselves became the undead and, even then, weren't the traditional shuffling zombies, but rather intelligent, wisecracking ghouls.

"It didn't make sense to me," he continues. "How does a zombie bite and infect the Hulk or Thor or Iron Man? It was later explained that the Sentry – which was Marvel trying to do Superman – got infected by the zombie virus and bit everyone else, but how did the zombies bite him in the first place?"

## BACK TO BASICS

Instead of merely ranting, Clines sat down with a notebook and started scribbling notes of what he would have done if he'd been writing *Marvel Zombies*: "That would have probably been it, but six months later my girlfriend and I got a bigger place and I finally got to unpack some of these boxes I'd been lugging around for thirty years." Inside, Clines found a heap of sketchbooks containing all the superheroes he had invented as a kid. "They were obviously the creations of an 11-year-old, following all the basic hero archetypes," he admits, "but I realised that with a bit of a polish, they would slot easily into the zombie superhero story I would have told." Clines did just that, updating his childhood heroes and throwing them into the middle of a zombie outbreak. "Before I knew what had happened, I'd written 20,000 words of the first novel."





Reading the *Ex-* novels, it's easy to see where Clines' inspirations lie. "I was shooting for the classic Marvel feel for my heroes," Clines says, "not the current belief that the only way you can have a complex character is if you screw them up. My heroes weren't going to be drunk, wife-beating, drug addled, war-scarred paedophiles. They were going to be human, with feet of clay, but still heroic. Not everyone has to be Batman – there's nothing wrong with having a character who believes we should be better."

## MORALS UNDER FIRE

This hankering for Silver Age heroes is personified in Clines' main protagonist – St. George, aka 'The Mighty Dragon. Clines wanted to show that you could still have morally upright characters, the kind of boy scouts everyone seems to think are old fashioned and boring these days: "To me, the whole idea that you can plunge someone with a strong moral code into a horrible situation like a zombie apocalypse is fascinating. My first thought when I heard of *Marvel Zombies* was what would Captain America do when a family shows up and wants to get into the safe zone and the mum has been bitten? How would Cap deal with it? How does he

reconcile his moral code with the choices he'll have to make? There's no winning move any more."

When it came to the zombies themselves, Clines immediately knew which path he was going to follow. "They're pretty much standard Romero shufflers," he reveals happily. "I've nothing against speedster stories, but I wanted my zombies to be mindless eating machines that stagger around and never ever stop." So wasn't he tempted to try something new, to turn the traditional tropes on their head?

"One of the big mistakes a lot of authors make is trying to come up with a clever new take on the zombie," Clines argues. "They spend ages trying to explain how it all works and what makes their zombies different. But at the end of the day a good zombie movie or book isn't about the monsters. It's about the victims. We don't care about zombies; we care about the people trying to get away from them. Yes, Jason Voorhees is cool, but the *Friday* *The 13th* films aren't about him. They're about the kids trying to survive."

Even when you try to come up with new ideas, chances are someone's already done it, as Clines found out when he had a chance to interview George Romero for *Creative*

*Screenwriting Magazine*. "In my books, I explain that zombies kill not by the virus but by everything else they're carrying around in their blood, every blood disease there was in Los Angeles at the time of the plague," Clines compared the zombies to the way people used to think the komodo dragons killed, thanks to a fatal cocktail of deadly bacteria in their maws.

All very clever and neat, until the author started to conduct preliminary research for his Romero interview: "I found an interview George gave twenty years ago, where he compared his zombies to komodo dragons and was suddenly terrified that people would think I was ripping him off when I'd been thinking I'd been so smart. Thankfully, I talked to a couple of die-hard zombie fans who had never heard of it. I'd found the one time where he had made that analogy. I ended up telling him about it during the interview and he thought it was funny."

## CAPES VS CADAVERS

So if the fun of watching a zombie movie is seeing how the uninfected cope with their scary new world, isn't using superheroes a bit of a cheat? As Clines has already said, Hulk would smash zombies to a pulp as soon as look at them. If bullets can't get through the big guy's green hide, how could decaying molars?

"From the off, I didn't want these to be Superman-level superheroes," Clines explains, insisting that he worked hard to make sure his

**"I've nothing against speedster stories, but I wanted my zombies to be mindless eating machines that stagger around and never stop"**







Spidey was Peter Clines' first introduction to superheroes.

main cast weren't a bunch of avenging gods. "At the end of book two, St. George gets a minor power-up, overcoming a mental barrier and getting stronger. Even then, he's still not as strong as Spider-Man is in the comics – and Spidey is a complete lightweight compared to others."

The rest of Clines' line-up have similar limitations, all of which make fighting zombies a little more interesting. Clines first invented Cerberus, clad in a big battle-suit, when he was about eight. All of his childhood creations were male – the concept of female superheroes alien to him at the time. When it came to updating them for the modern world, a little gender swapping came into play, with Cerberus becoming a woman. Her armour also got an upgrade – or should that be downgrade? "The suit's battery only lasts for an hour and a half," Clines chuckles. "She can kick ass, but is in trouble if the battle lasts more than 90 minutes. None of my heroes are over-powered."

## OVERWHELMING ODDS

Even if they were, Clines thinks that they might still struggle in a zombie-infested world. In his books the zombie virus has a transformation rate of around 60 per cent. Six out of ten of people bitten change into zombies. Sounds like good odds? Surely, if you can avoid being bitten you're on to a winner, right?

Wrong! "A 60 per cent transformation rate means that if everyone was bitten in Los Angeles alone, you'd still end up with five million zombies. That's a huge number, especially if they're all out on the street trying to kill you."

So, Clines' zombies may be going up against super-powered individuals, but they still have the advantage in his mind. "It doesn't matter in you've got rock-hard skin, super strength or a battle suit when you're facing such overwhelming numbers. It's like saying, I'm okay, I've got a gun and then finding yourself up against 600 people. You're still the underdog."

So the situation is grim and the odds are against our heroes – and yet time and time again, Clines has insisted that the *Ex-* books should be

uplifting, a word you don't usually associate with the zombie apocalypse.

"There has to be hope in horror," Clines insists. "It makes the horror more horrific. Compare a slasher film to a torture porn film. In torture porn, the characters don't have a chance, they're screwed. It's the same with a lot of Japanese horror. The moment the girl walks into the house she's dead. It doesn't matter if she gets out of the house or takes a bus across town, she's still dead. A little girl is going to crawl out of a TV screen no matter where she is and kill her. It can be scary, sure, but when something is so inevitable, when you have no hope of getting away, everything is lessened a little."

## A QUESTION OF SURVIVAL

Clines cites the 2007 remake of *I Am Legend* as an example. He says that post-apocalyptic zombie stories force us to ask ourselves a simple question: what would I do in that situation? How long could I survive?

"One of the things I enjoyed about watching *I Am Legend* is working out how long it would be before Will Smith put the gun in his mouth," Clines comments. "Why would he keep going, if he honestly believed he was it? Would there come a point when you start thinking that taking a lot of pills before bed wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing?"

Again, hardly uplifting – but the hope comes from Clines' characters, those righteous heroes he believes that Marvel has forgotten. "Whatever happens you need to believe your heroes are going to win, that things are going to get better. Sometimes they won't but you have to keep rooting for the characters."

Does this mean that St. George and the rest of the Mound heroes will one day find a cure to the zombie plague? With tentative plans for fifth and sixth instalments already in place, can we expect a happy ending?

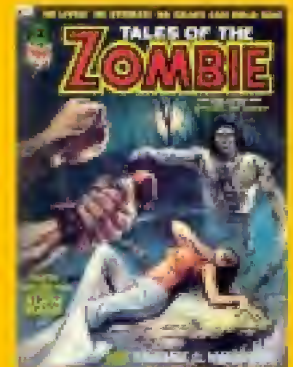
Clines shakes his head with a grin: "No, it's the apocalypse and you can't cure the end of the world – but you can always rebuild." **F**

# Night Of The Living Spandex

When superheroes become zombies...

## Tales Of The Zombie

Successful businessman – and all-round bully – Simon Garth is killed by his gardener and transformed into a zombie, controlled by a magical amulet. Garth was created by Stan Lee and Bill Everett for a one-off story in 1953 but was resurrected for his own short-lived series in '73.



## Marvel Zombies

Originally created by Robert Kirkman and Sean Phillips for a five-part mini-series in 2005, *Marvel Zombies* sees our favourite heroes transformed into flesh-hungry ghouls by an alien virus. A number of spin-offs have followed, seeing the zombies come up against everyone from Ash from the *Evil Dead* films to, er, Howard the Duck.



## Blackest Night

DC's big crossover event of 2009 saw Nekron, a personification of death itself, resurrect dead superheroes and try to eradicate all emotion from the universe. Cue zombie versions of Superman, Wonder Woman, Green Arrow and Batman all joining the terrifying Black Lantern Corps and a sprawling epic that took over 70 issues to complete.



## Zombo

Possibly one of 2000 AD's most outlandish strips, Zombo first appeared in Prog 1632. Created by Al Ewing and Henry Flint, Zombo is a joke-strip-wearing half-human, half-zombie government experiment with a secondary brain in his butt. He's also very polite, usually asking if he can eat you before diving in.



**"A 60 per cent transformation rate means that if everyone was bitten in Los Angeles alone, you'd still end up with five million zombies"**





# TOMBS OF THE BLIND DEAD

**Calum Waddell** examines de Ossorio's Blind Dead films, some of the best of the Franco-era Spanish splatter movies

**D**uring the era of General Francisco Franco (1936–1975), Spanish horror boomed. Given the brutality of the dictator's regime – which included the violent repression of dissenting political voices, the Catalan language, homosexuality and women's issues (abortion, contraception and divorce were all illegal) – this may seem somewhat inevitable. After all, turbulent times often produce the most reflective terror titles – from the darkly sublime Weimar-era German expressionism of *The Cabinet Of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and *Nosferatu* (1922) to the Vietnam War-inspired ugliness of *Night Of The Living Dead* (1968) and *The Last House On The Left* (1972). However, Franco was a leader who had also suppressed the arts... at least until commerce indicated otherwise. Indeed, when it became clear that cinema was an export that the financially floundering Spanish republic could make a mint from, the opportunity was opened up for popular genres to flourish.

That other Franco, the late Jess, started the trend with his 1962 classic *The Awful Dr. Orloff* and actor Paul Naschy became known as the Mediterranean Lon Chaney Jr, when he appeared in a series of lycanthrope-themed shockers, starting with *Mark Of The Wolf Man* (1968). Inevitably, in order to be exhibited in Madrid, filmmakers had to abide by censorship regulations – but this only resulted in a number of carnage-packed capers that used their fiendish thematic to belittle the excess of Franco's military-enforced autocracy.

One of the most prolific filmmakers engaging in this practice was a journeyman director called Amando de Ossorio who, after pottering away on a number of low budget dramas and westerns, hit his stride with a quartet of blood-drenched fright-films featuring the Knights

Templar. Beginning with 1971's *Tombs Of The Blind Dead*, de Ossorio introduced the world to some of the most memorable screen zombies in history: shuffling, sightless, sword-wielding skeletons, who ride on horseback across the Spanish countryside, often in stylishly-captured



You can tell it's an old film – she's never be allowed those cigarettes now.



slow motion, and attack in numbers. Their victims are usually the country's youth – represented by beautiful, sexually active babes in miniskirts and their equally athletic boyfriends.

Furthermore, unlike your common-or-garden Fulci or Romero flesh-feaster, the Knights Templar gnash at their victim's neck, drinking their blood, vampire-style. Indeed, de Ossorio – who passed away in January 2001 – described his plasma-thirsty protagonists, in a 1996 interview with *The Dark Side*, as “not ‘living dead’ or ‘zombies’ but mummies.” In the same conversation, the filmmaker explained that *Tombs Of The Blind Dead* had to be shot in Portugal (due to Spanish concerns about the content) and was influenced by the lavish, and surrealistic, shock-narratives of author HP Lovecraft. This aspect is especially obvious in the sequels, wherein seascapes, and legends surrounding the reef, are brought increasingly to the forefront...

That said, whatever its genesis, *Tombs Of The Blind Dead* remains one of the creepiest undead chillers of all time. The film introduces us to two girls (who once had a same-sex affair in their old boarding school) and a male friend who are travelling across Spain. When one of the girls elopes from the journey, she unwittingly stumbles upon the lair of the Templar Knights – an old witchcraft-practicing sect that sacrificed virgins prior to being hunted down by the locals. Once captured and killed, the Knights' bodies were hung and left to rot – with seagulls poking out their eyes. Hence, in resurrected form, the gruesome gore-drinkers can only prey by following noise, and not by visualisation.

## EXPLOITATION NATION

As *Tombs Of The Blind Dead* draws to a close, the evil entities gallop into a nearby beach town and corner the main cast members in an old graveyard. In the midst of this, de Ossorio throws in a number of bankable exploitation traits: there is a lesbian lovemaking sequence, torture, rape, a freshly-awoken female zombie and lashings of gory lacerations. Finally, as with Romero's *Night Of The Living Dead*, we are left with an open-ended conclusion in which it is indicated that the entire country will soon be subservient to the shambling carcasses – an allegory that is obviously



Just one of those quirky small-town churches, we're sure.



Never allow a frog to distract you from the undead corpses in the room.



Just your average night out in Seville.



## T IS FOR TOMBS OF THE BLIND DEAD

related to the Franco government of the time. Certainly, *Tombs Of The Blind Dead* is rich with socio-political subversion. The film's men are arrogant and brash, especially towards women, and the Knights Templar are doubtlessly indicative of the heavy-handed Catholicism that Franco indoctrinated into Spain – culling, in particular, a number of sexy señoritas.

### BLIND MARKETING

A popular hit across Europe, with big box office receipts in France and West Germany, *Tombs Of The Blind Dead* was also released in the USA under the odd moniker of *Revenge Of The Planet Ape*. The reason? An attempt to try and cash-in on the blockbuster box office of *Planet Of The Apes*!

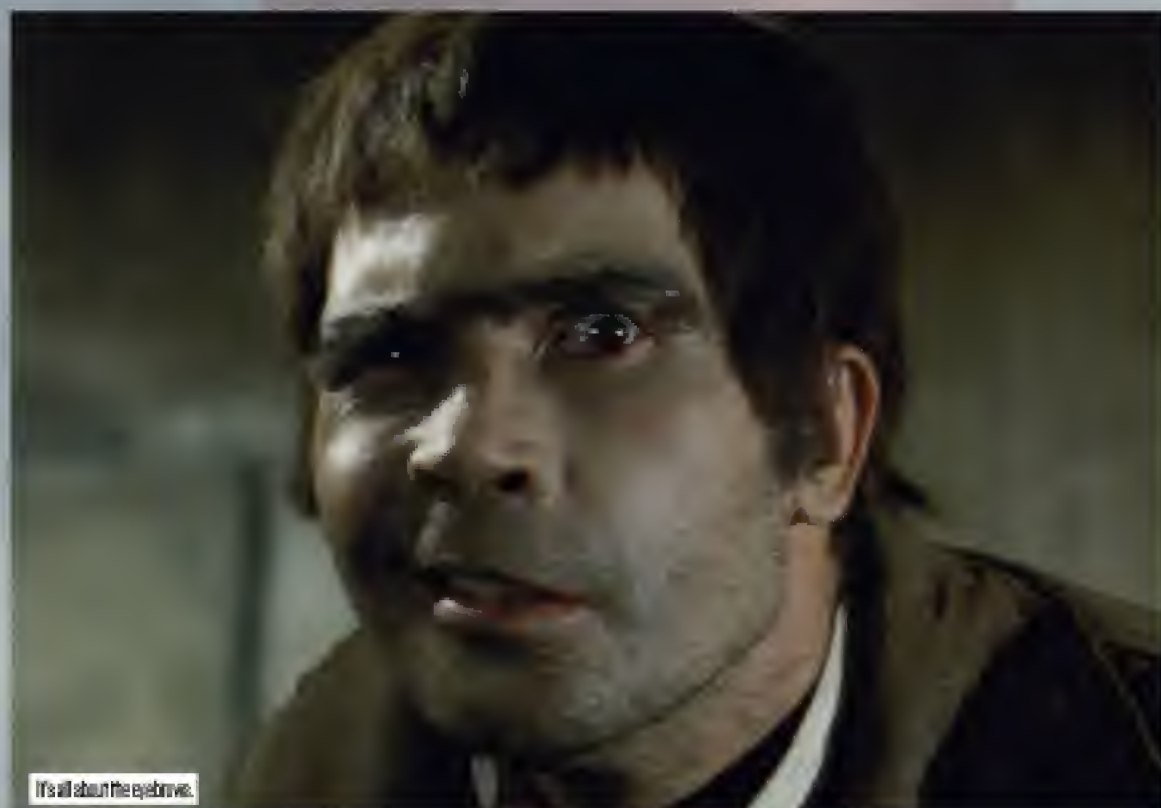
A pre-credits sequence even told American viewers that:

"Almost 3,000 years ago a simian civilisation of super-intelligent apes struggled with man to gain control of this planet. In the end man conquered ape after a brutal battle which saw him destroy the ape, his culture and society. After this battle man tortured and killed all of the ape prisoners by piercing their eyes with a red hot poker. One of these prisoners, who was also the leader of the apes, vowed that they would return from the dead to avenge man's brutality..."

Quite.

Exactly who saw the atmospheric intensity of de Ossorio's splatter-opus and concluded that it would benefit by being turned into a *Planet Of The Apes* movie has, unfortunately, never been revealed (or at least owned up to such an idiotic *faux pas*). Thankfully, though, due to the European profit, a sequel was soon whispered about and, just two years later, *Return Of The Blind Dead* was unveiled. Despite being not quite as creative as *Tombs Of The Blind Dead*, this unrelated successor (the only thing the two titles have in common is the Knights Templar) benefits from a slightly faster pace than its predecessor and a more coherent storyline.

Set in a small town called Rouzano, in Portugal, the film opens in the 13th century when,



once again, the Knights are being persecuted for their practice of human sacrifice. Tied to a brick wall, they are blinded with torches and set alight – a scene that is slightly reminiscent of the later heretic-torture which introduces the Lucio Fulci classic *The Beyond* (1981).

### A CARPENTER'S TALE

Yet the real influence that *Return Of The Blind Dead* casts is undoubtedly over John Carpenter's 1980 spine-tingler *The Fog*. Compare and contrast in the de Ossorio outing, the locals are planning for the 500th anniversary celebrations that mark the ousting of the cruel Knights. Predictably, the creepy cadavers have their own thoughts on this and, thanks to the assistance of a cackling hunchback (who kills a local lady in honour of the buried

bogeymen) they are soon rising up from their graves and trashing the nearby town.

In *The Fog* it is surely little coincidence that the script more or less sticks to the same premise of a mist-enshrouded menace gate-crashing a secluded seaside celebration. *Return Of The Blind Dead* also concludes with a nerve-shredding showdown in a church – similarly cribbed by Carpenter – pitting generations, young and old, against each other, as well as the invading Knights Templar. Given the repressive religiosity of Franco's Spain, the surrounding radiates with obvious relevance.

According to de Ossorio, though, *Return Of The Blind Dead* was "an anti-fascist movie... a movie against the establishment. A young couple making love are stopped by the knights, who are both warriors and priests, and they reflect the Spanish attitude of that time." However, as with his original *Tombs Of The Blind Dead*, whilst authority is shown to be morally corrupt (for instance, the town mayor attempts to escape by distracting the Knights' attention to a little girl in search of her missing father), once again it is the actions of men that are given particular scorn. Women are preyed upon, sexually harassed and/or disregarded as emotive and reactionary – although it is the film's female characters who frequently end up showing strength and survival skills.

Unfortunately, by the time de Ossorio embarked upon the third *Blind Dead* fable, with 1974's *The Ghost Galleon*, costs had clearly been curbed. Despite a decent leading man turn by perennial Spanish horror veteran Jack Taylor (who had appeared in numerous Jess Franco flicks), *The Ghost Galleon* seems to lack any sort of special effects budget. As such, the cast is few and the story, in which a model searches for two of her missing friends (who are in fact sailing out on the coast at the behest of a scummy fashion agency, before encountering the titular ocean-faring vessel), plods along. Most depressing is the fact that the Knights Templar don't show up until almost half an hour into the movie – shambling out of some tombs in the galleon itself and walking around a minimally decorated studio set.

Indeed, everything looks so cash-strapped in this second sequel, including a horribly realised miniature sea liner, that *The Ghost Galleon*



“Exactly who concluded that de Ossorio’s opus would benefit from being turned into a *Planet Of The Apes* movie has never been revealed”



## “Night Of The Seagulls shows a director eager for fresh challenges”

feels more like Z-movie version of the previous instalments than a proper entry in an ever-evolving mythology. The only slight saving grace is a genuinely haunting finale in which de Ossorio's immortal rogues rise up, out of the sea, in order to wander into yet another frightful follow-up...

### THE FINAL CHAPTER

So it was, then, that de Ossorio returned to his zombie-lore for one final time with 1975's *Night Of The Seagulls*. Even cheaper looking than *The Ghost Galleon*, this fourth feature has an upper-middle class doctor and his wife assigned to a small coastal resort. Taking its lead from *The Wicker Man* (1973), the town is built on superstition: every seventh year sees the resort descend into a week of slaughter, with a female virgin sacrificed every evening to the returning Knights Templar. Of course, our more “enlightened” couple arrive as these horrors are instigated and get caught in the middle of the macabre murder plots.

Although *Night Of The Seagulls* has some beautiful location shots, and is a little bit bloodier than *The Ghost Galleon*, it is clear that de Ossorio is struggling to make something new out of his living dead legacy. As usual, the swashbuckling, blood-spilling, blind dead ride into town on their horses and cause carnage – feasting on bound females and swinging at anyone who gets in their way. However, having taken time out from his fearful franchise to helm his excellent, and more lavish-looking, horror romp *The Loreley's Gasp* (1974), *Night Of The Seagulls* points towards a director who was, perhaps, eager for fresh stories and fresh challenges.

Ultimately, though, when General Francisco Franco passed away in November 1975, and Spain began its journey towards democracy, one thing was clear: the period in which directors such as de Ossorio used their horror productions to cleverly symbolise real-world concerns was over. The director himself maintained that, post-Franco, as censorship collapsed and his nation began a period of self-analysis, “political cinema” was dominant. After *Night Of The Seagulls*, de Ossorio would direct his own spin on *The Exorcist* (1973) with *Demon Witch Child* (1975), attempt a change of scenery with adventure romp *Vermis* (1976), and struggle in the world of “erotica” with the barely-seen *Forbidden Passion* (1980). One final, belated fear-flick arrived with the flop monster-mash *The Sea Serpent*.

It was not worth the wait.

Sadly passing away just before his *Blind Dead* movies were poised to be reappraised by a new generation of genre buffs on DVD, the filmmaker never quite lived to see himself hailed as one of the true originators of Spanish shock-cinema. However, as meat-munching movies began to explode into the mainstream, and *The Walking Dead* arrived to small screen success and acclaim, more and more horror-hounds began to look back in time and discover the dreadful joys of de Ossorio's Knights Templar. Finally, these creepy characters have become recognised, alongside the monochrome marauders of Romero's *Night Of The Living Dead*, as some of the early originators of zombie dread.

And you'd certainly have to be blind to argue otherwise. **F**

## TEMPLAR TROUBLE: THE BLIND DEAD FILMS RATED

### TOMBS OF THE BLIND DEAD

1971 Director: Amando De Ossorio

Rating: **★★★★**

Is it a zombie movie? Director De Ossorio reckons the Blind Dead are mummies. Whatever the case, they're a suitably unnerving menace in this superb horror. The first half-hour is a little slow, but this is a genuinely creepy film, with a fantastic final scene that sees the horror stretch its bony fingers into the outside world.

Alternative titles: *La Noche Del Terror Ciego*, *Revenge Of The Planet Ape*, *Revenge From Planet Ape*, *Night Of The Blind Terror*

### RETURN OF THE BLIND DEAD

1973 Director: Amando De Ossorio

Rating: **★★★★**

*Return* is something of a reboot, offering an alternative origin for the monsters, but it retains the bleak atmosphere of the original, and has some superbly tense sequences. An ending which sees the evil defeated is less effective, perhaps, but this is still that rare thing: a smart sequel.

Alternative titles: *El Ataque De Los Muertos Sin Ojos*, *Return of the Evil Dead*, *Attack Of The Blind Dead*

### THE GHOST GALLEON

1974 Director: Amando De Ossorio

Rating: **★★★**

Quickie threequel made on a pittance. The nautical theme does, at least, differentiate it from the previous films, but can't hide the fact that the series looks increasingly threadbare. Alternative titles: *El Buque Maldito*, *The Cursed Ship*, *Horror Of The Zombies*

### NIGHT OF THE SEAGULLS

1975 Director: Amando De Ossorio

Rating: **★★★★**

The last chapter is better than the third, even if it does have a daft title. With a creepy isolated village vibe and the Templar on the rampage one final time, it's good fun – but still falters in comparison to the first two films.

Alternative titles: *La Noche De Las Gaviotas*, *Night Of The Death Cult*, *Don't Go Out At Night*  
Will Salmon



"We're looking for the sequel..."



Riding off in to the sunset with her knight in sh... no, wait...



U IS FOR UNDEAD COUCH POTATO



# UNDEAD COUCH POTATO

The Couch crew tackle a quartet of zombie titles – who's going to make it out alive?

**T**he place: Steve O'Brien's house. The time: Couch Potato o'clock. "The last time I was at a zombie Couch Potato was 13 years ago, when we did it at Simon Pegg's house with Nick Frost, Jessica Stevenson and Mark Heap," says Steve. "But you lot are okay too." Gee, thanks, Steve, we hear you too. Still, if it was good enough for the *Spaced* gang, it's good enough for Will, Britt, Kev, Darren and Sian. Oh, and Steve, whom we've decided to forgive.

In the years that have passed since that celebrity-packed day in 2000, zombies have become a much bigger cultural phenomenon than they were – with much of the credit for that going to Simon Pegg and Edgar Wright, of course. But there's no *Shaun Of The Dead* on the playlist tonight, alas. Sorry boys, but it's difficult to find time to talk when you're guffawing too much. Still, we think you'd approve of our selection nonetheless – roll on the undead...



U IS FOR UNDEAD COUGH POTATO



Left to right: Steve, Kev, Will, Britt, Darren and Sian.

Image: © James Looker





Apologies to the vegetarians.



The bandages stop his head falling off.



Well, it's good to know the Scouts survive.



"You know, I really liked you in *The Matrix*."

## The Living Dead At The Manchester Morgue (1974)



First up, a slithery slice of Euro-pudding horror, *The Living Dead At The Manchester Morgue* (or

*Let Sleeping Corpses Lie or Don't Open The Window*, depending on which DVD you've bought), which remains beloved by zombie junkies, despite its batty attempts to pass off the Italian countryside as rural England and its jumblebag of riotously off-kilter accents.

**BRITT:** What's this one called?

**WILL:** *The Living Dead At The Manchester Morgue*.

**BRITT:** Classy. Directed by David Lean, by any chance?

The movie kicks off with a ravishingly soft-hued montage of 1974 Manchester in all its red-brick, post-industrial glory.

**STEVE:** Manchesterford, 1974!

**WILL:** This is no *Dracula AD 1972*.

**DARREN:** If a film is set in Paris they show the Eiffel Tower, if a film is set in London they show Big Ben or the Gherkin. What do they show if a film's set in Manchester?

**KEV:** A stabbed man covered in blood and vomit?

**SIAN:** Zombie Bez?

**STEVE:** I would have loved a film about a zombie Happy Mondays. But maybe that's *24 Party People*.

Three minutes in, and there's our first glimpse of tit as a streaker inexplicably runs across the shot.

**WILL:** This has nothing to do with the story by the way. We don't see her later as a zombie streaker, sadly.

**DARREN:** So Manchester in 1974 is basically Babylon?

**STEVE:** You can understand why Sam Tyler decided to stay there.

**KEV:** I was in Manchester last Monday, and it was nothing like that. The, er, variable accents – perhaps understandably to our vodka and pinot grigio-addled Couchers – are proving especially mirthful.

**WILL:** The lead guy sounds like he's doing a Bowie impersonation. Or Harold Sieptoe at the very least.

**BRITT:** This is making Daphne's brothers in *Frasier* sound like the Stone Roses.

To get you up to speed: George, played by Ray Lovelock (don't be confused by the name, he's

as Italian as Silvio Berlusconi chomping on gnocchi) is travelling to the Lake District with Edna (Cristina Galbó), who's en route to her sister's pad, when they come across a dead end alongside a river. Ray gets out of the car and, after hearing a loud humming noise, stumbles across some lab-suited men who are using a machine parked in a field with "Agricultural Department – Experimental Section" plastered ominously on the side.

**KEV:** So it's basically about farming and tinnitus?

**DARREN:** *Last of the Summer Wine – After Dark*.

**SIAN:** *After Death!*

Edna soon gets set upon by a zombie – the first we've seen – but luckily manages to escape. Later, it returns to kill Edna's creepy looking brother-in-law. The police don't believe it was zombies (the clueless clots), and instead are blaming Katie, Edna's sister.

After a slow but eerie start, the second half of the film lays on the zombies and the flesh-munching with reckless, classification board-baiting abandon.

**STEVE:** *Night Of The Living Dead*'s flesh-eating doesn't look as nasty in black and white. Was this movie the first time zombie fans had seen the undead in colour?

**DARREN:** As a vegetarian, I disapprove of this, while secretly loving it.

**BRITT:** This is really good. Despite the lead actor looking like someone from Mumford & Sons, the film comes across as really unsettling – like a '70s public information film about zombies.

**STEVE:** It's so good, I'm almost expecting a news story about Michael Bay remaking it any day now.



Oh yeah, the chicken wire's gonna save you.

## Fido (2006)



Next up, the critically acclaimed... *FIDO*! Yes, *Fido*. "An instant classic..." raves Ken

Eisner of Vancouver's *Georgia Straight* website on the DVD cover. "Madly funny!" screams another puff quote. "Hilariously funny!" yells one more. Yes, if you only see one Billy Connolly-fronted Canadian zombie comedy this year, make it this one.

Set in an alternate universe where radiation from space has turned the dead into zombies, this 1950s-flecked world is recovering from the "Zombie Wars" where humanity and the undead scrapped it out for supremacy. To allow the humans to live as normally as possible, society is run by Zomecom,

**"I can see what they're trying to do here, and I applaud the effort, but it's shit"**

a company whose job it is to protect the normals from the zombies. Think *Pleasantville* as directed by George Romero.

**WILL:** I've not watched this for years... I like Billy Connolly. I like zombies. It'll be good, right?

A scene-setting prologue establishes the movie's premise, that humans and zombies are kept apart in a form of apartheid. "Zomcom – a better life through containment," the public information film drones.

**SIAN:** It seems like very heavy-handed social commentary. In this reality, these pacified zombies are used as slaves, opening doors, doing the gardening and working as traffic wardens. With the hunger for human flesh taken away, they're just... thickos.

**DARREN:** So what's the difference here between a zombie and a common or garden moron? In the town of Willard ("That's the town in *Night Of The Living Dead*," points out Will, "I guess it's not a coincidence"), housewife Helen

Robinson purchases a zombie, which her son Timmy befriends, and names Fido. Fido is of course played by Billy Connolly, in what's hardly a stretching role.

**BRITT:** Who's playing the wife? Her name is just on the tip of my tongue...

**STEVE:** [glancing at the DVD cover] Jesus H Corbett! It's Carrie-Anne Moss, looking slightly less like KD Lang playing Emma Peel than she did in *The Matrix*.

These zombies wear collars that stop them wanting to feed on the humans. So, for most of this film, until the inevitable malfunction happens, they're pretty toothless creatures, devoid of much threat.

**STEVE:** Connolly looks too well-fed to be a zombie. They only look right when pipe-cleaner thin.

**KEV:** Why make a film about zombies that isn't remotely scary?

**DARREN:** It's too brightly lit. And the zombie make-up's shit.

**BRITT:** All they've done is put dirt on their faces. I've seen better zombies in films made on iPhones in Tesco car park.

**STEVE:** Connolly's hair's too neat as well. I mean, even if you'd bought a zombie, would you wash its hair?

**DARREN:** I can see what they're trying to do here, and I applaud the effort, but it's shit.

**KEV:** If this was an 18 film instead of a 15, they could have gone much farther with the concept. It's certainly different though.

The group's attention wanders and turns instead to discussing which are better, fast or slow zombies?

The consensus on *Fido* seems to be that there's something faintly pointless about a largely bloodless zombie movie, and something epically pointless about hiring one of the world's funniest comedians and have him stagger about going, "Eughhhrrrrrr" for 90 minutes.

**STEVE:** Also, *Fido* is a shit name. I prefer the Japanese title – *Zombido*!



"What do you think? Is the shirt too much?"





In fairness, it's been a tough year for Rick.



"Are you my mummy?"

## The Walking Dead: Seed (season 3, episode 1) (2012)



We couldn't exactly ignore this one, could we? Fifteen, ten, even five years ago, could

any of us have imagined that one of the biggest shows on TV would be a drama about a zombie apocalypse based on a comic book? So long the preserve of Fangoria subscribers and black-clad cult film fans (hey, not that we have anything against them, obviously), *The Walking Dead* ushered zombies into our living rooms and gave its writers the biggest canvas a zombie story has ever had on screen.

**BRITT:** Thank God you chose a season three episode. I think I would have nodded off if it had been from season two.

**WILL:** That year was like *The Good Life*, with the odd zombie thrown in. To recap: our ragtag group of survivors have escaped Hershel's farm after it was overrun by walkers, and have chanced upon the prison that'll be their home for the next series and a bit.

**WILL:** Britt – you're a lady, is Norman Reedus [Daryl] attractive?

**BRITT:** Are you kidding? YES!

**STEVE:** I'm slightly in love with Lauren Cohen, who plays Maggie. She went to the same university as I did, in Winchester. Sadly ten years after me. And I'm sure she's as gutted about that as I am.

The walkers are catching up with our gang as they're breaking into the prison.

**KEV:** The writers must have to have think-tank sessions on new ways to kill the walkers each week.

**STEVE:** I'd love to be a zombie extra. I wonder if they all eat together and stay away from the humans when they're on a dinner break?

There's one disappointing omission

**"Maybe the rest of the planet is fine and the United States has been quarantined off!"**

from the episode, however: there's no Governor this week.

**WILL:** He doesn't appear until the next episode...

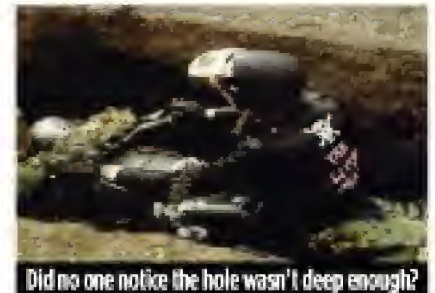
**SIÂN:** Aww, I love David Morrissey in this. But if you've seen *The Deal*, it is a bit like Gordon Brown going power-mad after a zombie apocalypse.

**STEVE:** I hope we find out what caused the zombieification. It's not mega important, but I've got an itch to know. Maybe it's just in America. Maybe the rest of the planet is fine and the United States has been quarantined off? Aw man, make me the next showrunner!

**DARREN:** Can't they introduce zombies into normal dramas? I'd love to see a random zombie episode of *Doc Martin*.



A subtle and understated film.



Did no one notice the hole wasn't deep enough?

## Psychomania (1973)



In this early '70s horror quickie, Nicky Henson headlines as a long-haired leatherboy who comes back from the dead.

**WILL:** I love this film.

**STEVE:** Nicky Henson tells a story that he asked one of the producers, "How did you get the money to make a piece of crap like this?" and the producer replied, "I just walked in to the money men and said I've got a script here about a teenage motorcycle gang who commit suicide, then come back from the dead." They apparently went, "How much do you need?!"

Yes, boys and girls, this is *Psychomania*, a limply executed British reaction to the leather-jacketed rebel genre of *Easy Rider* and *Vanishing Point*, with an added zombie twist – because that's

**"Someone munching on a sandwich really robs a scene of any drama"**

exactly what those two films were missing. It couldn't get more ready-cult if Jack Nance turned up with subtitles under his face.

Henson plays Tom Latham, luxurious of hair and dressed in clothes that only a middle-aged costume designer could ever think a biker wears. He owns a pet toad, has a Satan-worshipping mother (played, naturally, by Beryl Reid) and is a member of a biker gang subtly called The Living Dead. Yeah! Grrrr!

**SIÂN:** You can see every curve of his arse in that.

**STEVE:** He looks so unthreatening

as a biker. I imagine any genuine Hell's Angels would be furious to think they were being represented by these... hairdressers.

**BRITT:** This really is a BBC sitcom idea of a biker thug.

"Why did my father die in that locked room?" asks Tom of George Sanders' Shadwell, his mother's creepy butler. "Why don't you get any older?"

**DARREN:** Why have they got porn music in the background? It just makes me think Henson and Sanders are about to rip each other's clothes off and grease up.

"And what is the secret of the living dead?" demands Tom, biting into a massive baguette sandwich.

**KEV:** Someone munching on a sandwich really robs a scene of any drama, doesn't it?

**SIÂN:** Was this film sponsored by Subway by any chance?

Tom makes a deal with the horned one in order to rise from the dead ("Oh, he's just a crazy, mixed-up 35-year-old kid!" says Darren) and then kills himself by riding off a bridge before being buried upright, sitting on his motorbike.

**BRITT:** When they put the earth back in his little helmet's going to be sticking up.

**DARREN:** They're going have to have to bash it down.

**STEVE:** Sorry, is Talbot Rothwell scripting this Couch Potato?

**SIÂN:** Carry On Living!

The rest of Tom's gang eventually decide to join him in the undead by murdering themselves in various inventive ways.

**DARREN:** They could remake this now and it'd still be shit.

**WILL:** I'm not having that – this is cracking! Zombie bikers in a '70s supermarket? What's not to love?

**STEVE:** You know, this is so cruddy I'm thinking of killing myself. But if I do, please, please don't bury me standing up.



Nice goggles, guys.



We can think of better ways to kill yourself.



In the end, there can be only one.



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V IS FOR VOLUMES OF THE DEAD

# VOLUMES OF THE DEAD

**Will Salmon, Dave Bradley and Jess Collett**  
chat to the authors of the finest zombie  
fiction to crawl its way across the page





## MIRA GRANT

### WHO?

Mira Grant is the horror pen name of Seanan McGuire, who also writes urban fantasy under her own name. Born in Martinez, California, in 2010 she won the John W Campbell Award for Best New Writer.

### WHERE SHOULD I START?

Her Newsflesh trilogy began with *Feed* in 2010. Start there for her intelligent, politically-aware zombie apocalypse fiction. Recently she released her new novel *Parasite* which shares similar themes, although it's an all-new science thriller with body horror elements.

### WHY WOULD I LIKE IT?

The Newsflesh trilogy is an intelligent, genre-aware (they watch George Romero films for tips) take on how civilisation might cope with the outbreak of a zombie virus. Set 20 years in the future, some areas are still populated by large human societies, with politics and the media rumbling onwards as usual.



Mira Grant's latest novel is not for the squeamish, being ending a killer-made tapeworm?

### Q AND A

**Since completing the Newsflesh trilogy, what other good examples of zombie writing have you been reading?** *The Walking Dead* perhaps? I had to drop *The Walking Dead* comic because it got too bleak for me, which is a terribly difficult thing to do. Vertigo was doing a comic called *iZombie* by Chris Roberson for a while, which is one of the very few self-aware zombies that has worked for me. Daryl Gregory (who wrote *Pandemonium* and *The Devil's Alphabet*) did *Raising Story Mayhall*, which was just about "let's start a zombie religion." It was transcendently good, possibly the best zombie book I've read in years. And I'm still loving Peter Clines. He's continued with his series that started with *Ex-Heroes*. *Ex-Communication* just came out and it's fantastic. He just has these great ideas and he is completely content to just keep going and that makes me really happy.

I haven't seen much in the way of zombie movies recently. I think the last zombie movie I saw was *Resident Evil 5* which I refuse to have an opinion on until I see *Resident Evil 6*. *Resident Evil 1* and *2* are two of my favourite comfort movies. I know

they're cheesy popcorn movies, but they're my cheesy popcorn and they make me happy.

**Did you have time to see *World War Z*, or are you familiar with Max Brooks's novel?**

I love *World War Z*, the book – I just love it so much. And I've seen from the box office reports that *World War Z* has made money. I want it to make all the money both altruistically, because I'd like Max Brooks to see some profit from his work, and selfishly because I would love it if *World War Z* made lots of money and then the *Feed* movie would get green lit. That would be perfect, I would love that. But I've not seen it yet because from all the reports it's not the book, and unfortunately, in this case, I'm too attached to the original to fairly judge the film as a work by itself.

**So your new book, *Parasite*... Can you tell us a little about that and what went into it?**

There is a theory called the hygiene hypothesis which tries to explain the current rise in allergies and auto-immune disorders – things like Crohn's disease and colitis which

**'I WOULD LOVE IT IF THE *WORLD WAR Z* FILM MADE ALL THE MONEY AND THEN THE *FEED* MOVIE WOULD GET GREEN LIT'**

Image: © Carolyn Ellingsley



## I HAVE BEEN THE WORST PERSON TO HAVE DINNER WITH FOR TWO YEARS AS I WAS IN THE RESEARCH PHASE FOR *PARASITE*

most of us hadn't really heard of 20 years ago. It's because we've cleaned our bodies up, too much and too quickly. We've taken out all of the parasites and early exposures to virulent things that enabled our immune systems to bulk up and learn what they were doing. And now we have these weak immune systems that don't know how to work.

So, one of the ways that people in the real world still try to deal with this, and try to cope with auto-immune disorders and to deal with allergies, is through parasitic infection. You'll actually hear about people that are self-medicating with hookworm infestations, which is not good – hookworms are not your cuddly friends. So the basic concept behind *Parasite* is that a bio-tech firm said, "Why don't we monetise this?" And they genetically engineered themselves the perfect tapeworm; it's guaranteed to die after two years, it won't latch on to major arteries in your stomach and cause you to haemorrhage to death while you're sleeping, it won't steal too much nutrition, and you'll get nutritional packets to go with them so you take your vitamin every day and your tapeworm is fine. And in exchange you have better health, fewer colds, you don't have allergies, you don't have auto-immune conditions.

They've also tailored the tapeworm to secrete medicine that you need to have on a daily basis, so if you're a diabetic, you can get an insulin monitoring tapeworm and it's perfect – you can be thin and healthy forever if you take one pill, it's like the American Dream. Unfortunately, the tapeworms have other ideas and eventually, as parasites do, they start manipulating and conquering their hosts, which is super fun. Parasites are the best thing. I have been the worst person to have dinner with for the last two years as I was in my research phase, and now I'm having fun with my parasites.

### Is it the first in a series?

It's the first in a duology. The second will be out in 2014. We're still debating on the title because my initial title was *Symbiogenesis*, which everyone says is quite long. So we'll probably find something a little shorter and easier to spell for book two. Book one is set before the collapse of everything book one is just when we're just starting to find out what's up with the tapeworms and book two is after, so the collapse will happen in the gap between the two books. Which is good because I'm tired of writing the apocalypse.



The final book in Grant's Newsflesh trilogy – read it, but read the first two first.

There are only so many ways I can kill everyone.

### Is societal collapse still a fascination of yours though?

Society caving in is *absolutely* fascinating to me because there are so many knock-on effects that we don't think about. I drink diet soda compulsively and I tell people that for me the benchmark for when it's become an apocalypse is when the diet soda has gone off (it's got a three-month shelf life). If we've hit three months and services have not been restored, society has well and truly collapsed and that's kinda where my timeline is.

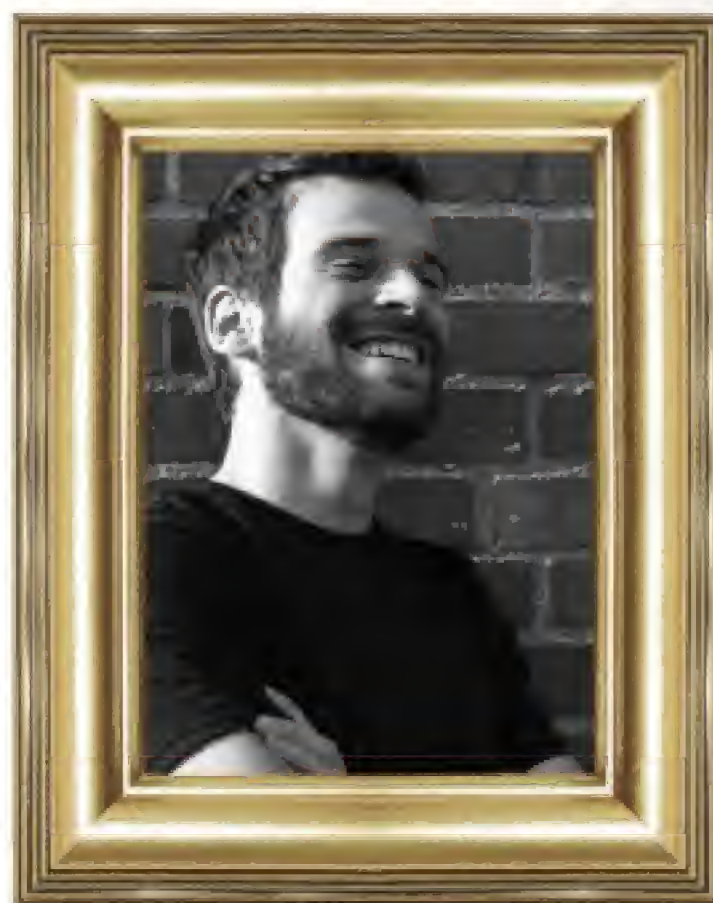
Is the zombie apocalypse a topic you'll be returning to in the future? I'm hoping to go back to the

Newsflesh universe for one more book, which is called *Rewind*. If you remember *Feed* was all about the Republican campaign for the presidency, *Rewind* will be the Democratic campaign for the exact same time period. So it's following a different set of characters through that same window of time and we'll actually get to see what happened to the Democratic candidate who, in the series, is reported to have committed suicide. So we know how that ends – I want to tell people why it ended that way.

I've also been doing novellas in that world this whole time. But right now, I'm actually thinking about a weaponised disease on a cruise ship. I would love to ruin cruises for everyone else; I've already ruined the news and food!







## PETER STENSON

### WHO?

Peter Stenson has published short fiction in numerous literary magazines, as well as receiving an MFA (Master of Fine Arts) from the Colorado State University. *Fiend* is his first novel, and was described by Warren Ellis as "the last zombie novel you'll ever need to read." Crikey.

### WHERE SHOULD I START?

*Fiend* is a blackly comic tale where the only survivors of a zombie apocalypse are meth addicts. Chase Daniels and his friend Typewriter wake from a massive binge to find that the world has ended without them realising. Chase sees this as an opportunity to reboot his life and win back his ex-girlfriend, KK.

### WHY WOULD I LIKE IT?

Think *Breaking Bad* with zombies. This is a very funny, very dark tale that puts a literary spin on the zombie apocalypse.

### O AND A

**What was the starting point for writing *Fiend*?**

I was in grad school working towards my MFA and was a bit frustrated with the whole literary short story scene. I wanted something with a little teeth (bad pun intended). So during my second year of school, I started writing *Fiend* on the side. It was my bastard child that I kept locked away from the rest of the world.

**What inspired you to mix the wildly different themes of the living dead, dystopia, and drug addiction?**

I wanted to tell an addiction story, but I wanted it to be exciting and terrifying (ie I wanted an actual plot) and zombies seemed to be the perfect metaphorical vehicle to accomplish this feat. The parallels between a tweaked out meth addict and the walking dead are uncanny (open sores, shuffling, doing anything for their next hit/feed). I struggled with addiction during my teens. It sucked. Those memories and experiences have never left me, and they needed to come out through my writing, but it had all been done before. So I added a walking embodiment of my

character's addiction, some guns, and lots of blood, while staying pretty damn true to the emotional truth of what it's like to suffer from addiction.

***Chase Daniels is not a likely hero, is he?***

I love the tradition in zombie literature and film to have unlikely characters step-up and lead a group to some form of salvation. I wanted to play off this trope. But I also wanted my characters to be flawed, because nothing annoys me more than characters portrayed in literature as being good or bad. The most interesting characters are mixes of both, I believe any sort of complex character has a sliding moral compass – or more specifically, has a set moral compass, but chooses actions that contradict that belief system. This is what we, as regular boring humans, do every day. This is why I find people interesting. Chase might be an antihero, might make some shitty decisions, but I wanted to show him as human, as longing to be better than he is, to be conflicted and vulnerable.

***Fiend is an uncomfortable read. Did you feel that it was important for the***

**"THE PARALLELS BETWEEN A METH ADDICT AND THE WALKING DEAD ARE UNCANNY – OPEN SORES, SHUFFLING ..."**



## 'I WANTED THE READER TO EXPERIENCE WHAT IT'S LIKE WHEN ALL YOU CARE ABOUT IS GETTING THE NEXT HIT'

*book to have an intense impact?*

Absolutely. I wanted *Fiend* to be as close to the experience of an addict as possible (zombies aside). I wanted the reader to feel a sense of claustrophobia inside the head of my first person narrator. I wanted my character's thoughts to be forced on the reader, to have the reader get lost in the dream of fiction and experience firsthand what it's like when all you care about is getting the next hit. I wanted to accomplish these feelings because that was what I experienced during my addiction. And my goal wasn't to spread the sickness of addiction, but to offer up a realistic take on substance abuse.

*Did you find writing about Chase and Typewriter cathartic?*

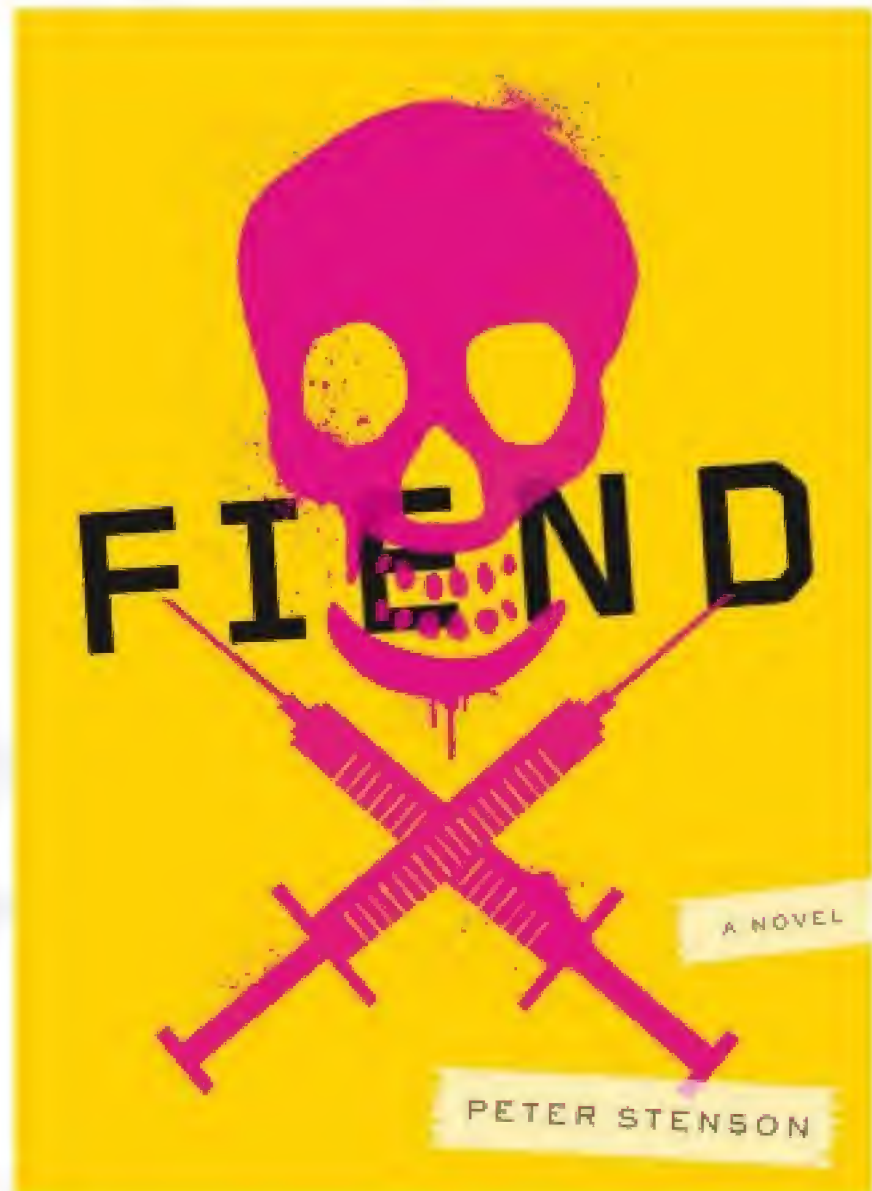
Very much so. As I mentioned earlier, sometimes the only way to get rid of certain memories and experiences is to write them out (at least for me). Writing *Fiend* was a good reminder of how messed up I'd been in my late teens. And in a strange way, when the book was finished, I felt some sort of gratitude for my addiction and the subsequent ten years of sobriety.

*Fiend is genuinely funny. Did you find the humour as necessary for you, the writer, as it is for the reader?*

Glad to hear you thought that parts of the book were funny. I try to add humour to most of what I write. The reason? Most of what I write tends to be very dark. And as a writer (and son, husband, and father), that can be a dangerous mindset to constantly be in. So I try to add levity. Little breaths of air, both for the reader and for myself. I've always heard that any comedy is rooted in tragedy; so if I'm writing tragedy, why not add a little comedy? I'm sure there's some faulty logic here, but I was never one for those math word problems.

*Is Chase and KK's relationship a further exploration of the theme of addiction?*

I tend to be a pretty obsessive person. It doesn't matter what the subject is. My mind wraps around something and churns it over and over again. Right now, I'm pretty obsessed with getting my fantasy football rankings in order. Before that, it was a garden. My point is, I think the way I view things is a bit different from the majority of others. Which is why when I wrote about Chase and KK's relationship, it probably came across as obsessive. That wasn't necessarily my point. But I don't think it really matters what my point was. Their love was obsessive.



It was a bright point in Chase's life, and as he's prone to do throughout the book, he obsesses over those moments, regrets the choices he's made, imagines a thousand scenarios where things could've turned out differently. This shaming fantasising is a favourite pastime of most addicts. And meth only speeds up the thought process. I think it's up to the reader how they take the relationship, but the obsessive quality to it wasn't a conscious decision on my part.

*The only survivors in the book are using meth. Did you seek to contrast the hopes of utopia often found in apocalyptic fiction and the desperation of addiction?*

One hundred per cent. Call me a pessimist, but I'm not a big believer in human nature. Or maybe I am, but only in the smallest of fractions of it. I don't think things necessarily end well for the human species. So yeah,

if zombies start storming the streets, the "heroes" are going to be few and far between. As for addiction, I wanted to paint a realistic portrait of it. There are a handful of lucky people (myself included), who, for whatever reason, are able to be sober a day at a time. But unfortunately, the vast majority never get this. And it's heartbreaking.

*What are your own favourite zombie stories?*

I love all of Romero's movies. I loved *Zombie Strippers*. But I think my favourite zombie movie is *28 Days Later*. For some reason, this was the most terrifying of them all to me. It was so much about the characters, so much about the choices we make... not to mention the people infected with the Rage virus were just so damn fast! As for books, it starts and stops with *World War Z*. I think it's an absolute masterpiece. »

## 'I'M NOT A BIG BELIEVER IN HUMAN NATURE. I DON'T THINK THINGS NECESSARILY END WELL FOR THE SPECIES'





## DAVID TOWSEY

### WHO?

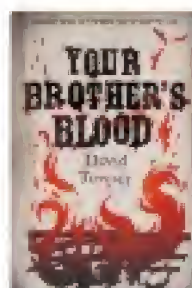
David Towsey has been writing for many years, having published short stories in small press magazines and online. He's currently finishing his PhD in Creative Writing at Aberystwyth University while also working on his second novel.

### WHERE SHOULD I START?

Towsey's debut novel, *Your Brother's Blood*, is the first volume in The Walkin' Trilogy. Set hundreds of years in the future, it's a dust-blown blend of Cormac McCarthy and George Romero.

### WHY WOULD I LIKE IT?

It's bleak and beautifully written. As with Isaac Marion's excellent *Warm Bodies*, the hero is a zombie, and Towsey uses this peculiar viewpoint to explore themes of prejudice, intolerance and religion. Set in a tough, richly detailed fictional world, it does the post-apocalypse thing in a surprising and original way.



The second and third in the series are written in progress, and David has some ideas for the next thing you...

### Q AND A

**How would you sum up your novel?**

It's *The Road* meets *The Walking Dead*. Or, put another way, it's part road-movie and part zombie-western. It has a strong focus on family relationships, which are put under strain for a number of reasons.

**The hero, Thomas, is a zombie – how was it writing him?**

I enjoyed imagining what it would be like for a zombie character to be self-aware and to retain all their emotional connections after death. Obviously it changes how someone thinks about pretty much everything. Thomas battles with this a lot – he wants to see his family, but knows he's different now. Thomas is emotionally very human.

But physically, Thomas is a very different character to write. Simple stuff like the fact he doesn't eat (not even brains) does make a difference – it changes his motivations and capabilities and interactions. He helps his daughter find food, but only when she reminds him. When things go wrong for Thomas, that's when the physicality comes into its own – he has to cross a river and he feels the water tear through his legs. I perhaps enjoyed writing those bits too much – that makes me a bad person, right?

**The book is set quite far into the future, but has a western aesthetic. What was behind this decision?**

I read quite a lot of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction and

something that often strikes me is how cataclysmic the stories are. I guess the clue is in the word "apocalyptic". But what is largely happening is the sweeping away of modern society. It can be nuclear war, flooding, a meteor, a plague, anything hugely devastating. I started wondering what would happen if the modern era just kind of slowly declined. I picture us returning to the horse-reliant existence often shown in westerns. I hope we don't – I can't imagine hand-writing a novel let alone washing clothes – but it seems a more optimistic future than some.

**What are your touchstones in terms of both zombie stories and westerns?**

Confession time – I'm no expert in zombie stories or westerns. I like to think that this is a good thing, that it helps me be more original. But I know it probably isn't. I've read a few classic westerns like *Shane* and *The Virginian* and seen some of the important films. They're interesting, but what I find more useful are modern takes on the genre. Which means Cormac McCarthy. I've already mentioned *The Road*, but *No Country For Old Men* and *Blood Meridian* are both fantastic novels that invoke a western feeling without overdoing it.

Zombie-wise it has to be *I Am Legend* – even though they're called vampires in the novel, Romero has commented how influential those vampires were for his zombies. It's a phenomenal novel, easily one of my top five favourite reads.

Image: © Keith Morris





## ALEXANDER GORDON SMITH

### WHO?

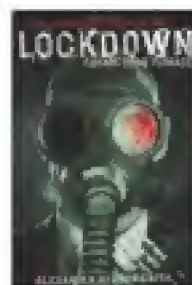
Alexander Gordon Smith has been busy building himself a reputation as the author of a series of smart, exciting Young Adult novels like *The Inventors* and the *Furnace* series. He is also the co-founder (with his sister Kate) of Fear Driven Films, an award-winning production company.

### WHERE SHOULD I START?

*The Fury* is Smith's zombie tour-de-force. One day everything is normal, the next, Cal, Brick, Daisy and their friends find that everyone in the world wants to kill them. Originally released in two parts, it's now available as a mammoth "Director's Cut" paperback edition.

### WHY WOULD I LIKE IT?

It's compulsively readable and surprisingly unflinching for a Young Adult book. It makes for an oddly personal end of the world tale. For the vast majority of people, life is going on as normal, but our heroes are isolated and on the run.



They might be "Young Adult", but Smith's novels contain some pretty terrifying stuff.

### Q AND A

#### What was your initial inspiration?

I'd been wanting to write a zombie story for a while, but couldn't find my own unique take on it. One day I was thinking back to my childhood, to a game we had to play in PE called Murderball. The rule was simple: you had a rugby ball, and everyone else had to get it from you. Every time, without fail, you'd end up in a pile with thirty people on top of you punching and kicking and biting and strangling you. These were my friends, but something in them changed during this game, they seriously wanted to hurt me. And it got me thinking that what if the thing that turned people into zombies wasn't a chemical or a virus, but you. When you're near people, they lose their minds and become feral, but as soon as you're dead, or out of their "radar", they go back to normal.

#### Was it always intended as two books?

I always thought it would be one book, but it kept getting longer and my UK publisher decided to publish it as two. Then my US publisher thought they'd package it as one and that caught on over here too.

#### Was zombie fiction an inspiration for the series?

Absolutely. I have always been a huge fan of zombie fiction, and I immersed myself in it on the run-up to starting *The Fury*. For a few months I read everything I could, and watched so many zombie films, good, bad and ugly, and played horror videogames

relentlessly. I felt consumed by zombies, I was getting anxiety attacks! But that was the plan, I wanted to get a sense of what it was like to be these guys seeing the world come apart around them, I wanted to get into that mindset of panic and horror. It made the process more personal, I felt like I was writing to survive.

#### What do you think is the appeal of apocalyptic fiction?

The idea is kind of liberating, isn't it? I mean, any kind of apocalypse – zombie or not – would be a total nightmare. But in a way it frees us too, saves us from the stresses of modern life. The stresses of the apocalypse are baser, older. It's all about survival.

#### You co-own Fear Driven Films. How did that come about?

I set up Fear Driven Films with my sister, Kate Smith. We both adore horror films, we've watched them together for as long as we can remember. One day we were watching something and we just decided to have a go at making a film ourselves. We wrote a screenplay for a horror comedy called *Stagnant*, about a mutant bride who hunts down stag parties on the Norfolk Broads, and we're in the process of making it now. It has been a real eye opener. All you really need to write a book is you and a computer. But making a film, it's a logistical nightmare, there is so much involved. I love it, though, and it's great working with Kate. **F**







**SEASON 4  
PREVIEW**



# THE WALKING DEAD

Joseph McCabe speaks to the cast and crew about  
grief, brutality and what season four has in store



**E**ven for a show that's always prided itself on its willingness to kill characters, season three of *The Walking Dead* was a bloodbath.

In the wake of Dale and Shane's departures in season two, and the discovery of the prison – as sturdy a refuge as any post-apocalyptic survivor could hope for – fans may have thought their heroes were in for some well-deserved R&R.

They thought wrong.

Season three wasted little time in introducing the Governor, the most villainous antagonist Rick and co had yet faced. As played by David Morrissey, the Governor, along with katana-sliding warrior Michonne (Danai Gurira), brought new life to the *Dead*, and propelled the story forward at lightning speed. But a price was paid. Lori, Rick's estranged wife, died giving birth to the couple's daughter. Daryl was reunited with long-lost brother Merle, only to lose him in a startling moment of self-sacrifice. And Andrea took her own life when bitten by the Governor's advisor-turned-zombie Milton.

How then does one follow-up what many believe to be show's strongest year yet? Producer/director/make-up-wizard Greg Nicotero tells us – when we sit down to discuss this season of *The Walking Dead* with its cast and crew – that the secret is to look at the best of all the show's seasons, and produce a "greatest hits" package.

**"I feel like this is sort of the greatest hits. That we're compiling the great emotional moments and the great action moments"**

"Season one had those great emotional moments," says the zombie maestro. "You know, when Morgan's sitting there with his gun trying to shoot his wife and weeping – that moment so brilliantly crafted by Lennie James and Frank Darabont – it just pulls you in so, so deeply. Between that and some of the action beats that we moved into at the end of season two and season three, I feel like this is sort of the greatest hits. That what we're doing is compiling the great emotional moments and the great action moments."

"The group dynamic starts to get more combustible and the pressure certainly builds," says Andrew Lincoln, now tasked, as Rick, with uniting his own group with the people of Woodbury abandoned by the Governor. "You find so much more in these episodes, certainly in the first five or six episodes, about Tyreese, Sasha; a lot of characters, you know, Carol; and a lot of characters that maybe we didn't explore in detail as much last season because of the action and the pacing of the show."

## FUTURE SHOCKS

An underdetermined amount of time has passed since Rick opened the prison doors to the refugees in the final moments of season three. "There's no calendars anymore," adds the actor, "we're sort of losing that. Time becomes irrelevant."

Lincoln does, however, hint that time may be played with in the form of flashbacks this

year: "I think with the structure of the show, we can go backwards in time and we can play with structure a bit more. I think that may possibly happen this season."

Last year, Rick's sanity came into question when Lori died. Has Rick's mental health improved since we last saw him?

"He'll always be changed by the events, losing one of the most important reasons that drove him to keep moving forward in this world. But yeah, I think certainly [he's] in a completely different place. For the sake of his children, he's kind of renounced leadership and has had to subdue the brutality of the world and the brutality that is inside of him."

"He was so far lost last season that it was an important thing, certainly for the hope and the moral compass of the show. I always feel that if you lose him too far, I think you lose the comic book as well, because he's always been that sort of central role. What I've noticed certainly is that as we've been working on it you really get a sense of how this world is psychologically changing its people. You really get a sense of that. Certainly Tyreese and Sasha and all these other characters that we want to know more about."

Change, says Lincoln, is what keeps him coming back and giving "everything I've got every single season."

"It's not a static show. By definition, by losing characters and moving locations, and meeting new people, it's this ever-changing thing. It's organic... The brutality and the love that is inherent in each human being, the animal side and the compassion, I think they're interesting areas to explore. I think we do it really well in the show, for all the characters."



Father and son... happy family times?



## “It’s not a static show. By losing characters and moving locations, meeting new people, it’s this ever-changing thing”

Rick’s growth this year, explains the actor, is spurred in part by his son Carl’s unprovoked killing of a young man last season.

“That’s a huge change in this season. He certainly is taking responsibilities as a father figure. You’ll see a changed man. Or a man attempting to change, or maybe return to the man he once was. We’ll see. That dynamic has always been fascinating to me in the comic book, that relationship. They do a really cool thing. That’s as much as I can say.”

Though he may have a firmer grip on things, Lincoln says we shouldn’t expect to see Rick find a new love in his life just yet.

He laughs recalling an incident at *The Walking Dead*’s 2013 San Diego Comic-Con panel: “Apparently the fanboys decided that me and Michonne are having an affair this season.”

“I think,” he adds soberly, “that there should be a little bit more grieving time. I think it’s too profound a death for me to get back into the dating game just yet. But I may be wrong.”

### DEALING WITH LOSS

Of course Rick isn’t the only person who’s lost someone close to him. Norman Reedus explains how Merle’s death affects his brother this year...

“With the death of Merle, I think he’s sort of becoming his own man, he’s finding his sense of ➤



Somebody told him that black was “in” this year.



We can't help noticing that neither of his hands are actually on the trigger.







self-worth that he wouldn't have had before. He was destined to become another Merle – you know, a racist, drug-taking asshole. And he's found this glue that's keeping him there, and that's his other people. The thing about Daryl, if something needs to be done, he'll get it done. But he doesn't want to sit in front of you and talk about your feelings and how you're doing today and "This is our plan." I don't think he wants that responsibility, ever. But he gets stuff done. He more than loves all these people, and would take a bullet for them."

With season three's sudden, climactic death of Andrea (who develops a relationship with Rick in Robert Kirkman's comic), *The Walking Dead* has deviated more sharply from its source material than ever before. Will the comic book serve as less of a roadmap from here on out?

"We're going to use milestones in the comic as milestones for us," explains executive producer David Alpert. "But how we get there in between... You saw when we went from the fall of Atlanta to the farmhouse to the prison. That progression is in the comic, but we skipped over Wiltshire Estates. Andrea is dead and Daryl Dixon didn't exist [in the comics], so there's definitely changes. But yeah, the progression as to where things are going, we'll see a lot of the milestones from the comic."

Alpert's fellow exec Gale Anne Hurd agrees. "Sometimes we'll speed up, and sometimes we'll slow down, because that's where the characters' stories come from."

## THE NEXT GENERATION

One character that died in the comic before her story could begin was Rick and Lori's daughter, Judith, affectionately dubbed "Lil' Asskicker" by Daryl. Fortunately, she remains – at least for the moment – very much alive in season four.

## EXCLUSIVE: A FAREWELL TO ANDREA

The most shocking moment on *The Walking Dead* last year was, arguably, the death of Andrea in the season finale. It surprised actress Laurie Holden as well, who learned she'd be leaving a mere two days before shooting the episode. But when we catch up with Holden at this year's Saturn Awards in Burbank, she tells us she's happy with the resolution of Andrea's story.

"One-hundred per cent," says Holden. "I couldn't have asked for a better death. I know that some people were not satisfied because they wanted her to go out more *Indiana Jones* style. But I would rather have died in the arms of my best friend with dignity and grace, standing up for something than go out in a superheroesque way."

Some fans' disappointment stemmed from a desire to see Andrea and Rick couple, since the characters eventually fell for each other in the comic.

"I wish we'd gotten there. I think Andy Lincoln wishes we'd gotten there. A lot of the writers and producers wish we did too. But it was a decision that was made, and the truth of the matter is that the reason our show works is we throw curve balls and we don't follow the comic book exactly. Yes, in a perfect world that would have been wonderful storytelling. But at the same time it's also great storytelling that Andrea died standing up for the people and Rick had a healing, and his sanity was revived and all is good in Denmark."

As for whether or not we may see Andrea return in flashback, Holden

remarks, "I love the people that I worked with and for. They will be my family in perpetuity. If there was a gorgeous flashback that was poignant and beautiful? Of course I'd do it. I mean, these are my people. But I just think that it's time for them to move on and move forward in their storytelling and I feel like Andrea's story's been told."





"We don't want to just ape the comic," says Alpert, "and Robert's in the room helping to guide these discussions with [new showrunner] Scott [Gimple] and everybody, and there is discussion on this. But at the same time, we didn't want to undermine the impact of Lori's death. It was such a traumatic thing, and honestly the way it played out over the course of season three, it's like, to lose a daughter... We [thought], 'You know what? There are great opportunities for jeopardy, having a kid. Kids make noise, they need constant food, they need constant attention, and they're going to interrupt their sleep. All these things play out. It just adds a great strain. Let's see that. Let's see how that plays out.'"

"We haven't had a baby in the apocalypse before," nods Hurd. "At least not in our apocalypse."

Amidst the human drama, Nicotero assures us we'll see improvements in his ever-evolving undead creations.

"We're always pushing the envelope," he says. "There's a great walker in the trailer, the one that's trapped under a broken tree. You get a sense that he's been in the woods for a long time. That was a gag Robert Kirkman wrote in episode three... We've improved upon our hand puppets and things so that we can really sort of grab something, bring it onto set, shoot it. It's the way everything is designed, knowing we have eight days to shoot stuff. We've built these hand puppets that when you open the mouth the lips peel back. And we've been using them a lot, interspersed with people in

make-up. You'll see a quick cut of a puppet with no nose or a missing jaw. It will be like, 'Well, how did they do...?' It's always mixing up between us and Stargate Visual Effects. It really is a well-oiled machine. Four years running, we finish each other's sentences."

## NEW AND IMPROVED

Newly minted showrunner Scott Gimple (replacing Glen Mazzara) laughs at the irony of keeping zombies "fresh."

"Zombies are not fresh. They're decidedly unfresh! We let our imaginations run wild. I can actually say, it was in the trailer, Robert had a fantastic walker – I'm not even going to say which episode, but it might be in the first five – this moss-covered walker. This guy who had gotten crushed under a tree so he's been there for months and months and months and months. I don't know. You let your imaginations run wild. The writers sit down in the writers' room, and you kick it around. We come up with things, and we're like, 'Oh yeah, they're never going to be able to do that,' and then we sit down with Greg and he's like, 'Oh yeah, we can totally do that. Here's this and here's that'."

"I was sitting in an audio playback with Gale Ann Hurd. We were saying we really should have an internal awards show for walkers – you know, Best Half-Walker – because there are some amazing ones this year. We have featured ones, like the moss-covered one I talked about, but we have some that you see briefly that, just even in

the brief moment, they tell a bit of the story of how they got there. Yeah, the walkers have been amazing this year."

Gimple quickly adds, however, that the show's zombie elements don't work if they're not in service to the story of people uniting to survive.

"It's about these people in a horrific world and how that horrific world changes them, and how they change each other in that environment. The number one thing about it is the characters, the emotion, where that goes. But it just so happens that the basic threat in this world are zombies. And zombies are fascinating and scary and they show the threat of the world. So we want to do it in as entertaining, scary a way as possible so that... you do feel it. That the audience is afraid, and you feel the pain of that loss, and feel the pain of what that world is. But it's all in service to that. It's definitely not 'We need an awesome zombie right now...' Robert has it in a brilliant speech in the comic. Basically, Rick says, 'We are the walking dead.' That's what this world turns you into. The zombies are a reflection of what they've become."

## EVERYTHING CHANGES

We ask the cast to share their thoughts on what they've seen of season four so far.

"I think there's a definite uncomfortability," says the woman who's brought Michonne to life on-screen, Danai Gurira. "That is going to be consistently kept up. There'll be times where you'll feel an ease – 'Oh, okay, cool' – and then you see characters and... Bam! You'll never be comfortable. I think that's exciting. I mean that's the drama to me, the combination of that level of action and that level of gentleness that's going to keep at it. You'll just never be comfortable."

**"You know what? There are great opportunities for jeopardy, having a kid. Kids make noise, they need constant attention. It adds a great strain"**



Those contact lenses must be hell to put in every morning.



The first thing we lost in this apocalypse was a decent hair conditioner.



"We never slow down," says Reedus. "It picks up where we left off and we go into full-blown gear, but the emotion isn't the same, rubbing at the same RPM as our speeds. There's a lot going on. Everything means something. I think it's the best scripts we've ever gotten in the season. Everyone is very excited. I know when scripts come in, we all call each other, and go, 'Oh my God, did that...?' We're really excited, and so I think everyone's going to be excited too."

Before we let the cast and crew get back to work, we think it's only appropriate to let Robert Kirkman have the last word, seeing as how *The Walking Dead* began with him.

"One of the things I'm most proud of when it comes to this show is the fact that oftentimes when a show gets this successful, there's a desire to not rock the boat, to stick with what works, to go 'Hey, we've been doing this for three seasons now. Let's try and do more of the same.' I think everyone on this show is committed to keeping the show evolving and continuing to up our game, and doing new things. So coming into season four, it was really just a matter of looking at everything we've done thus far, looking at what's worked, looking at what hasn't worked, and trying to find the perfect new elements that will elevate our game, intensify our season, and make this show even better. Even though the show is doing well – we're all very happy with how the show does – we don't rest on our laurels. We know that we have to roll our sleeves up every season and come out of the gate strong and really deliver the material; and hopefully impress people year after year so that they keep coming back for more."

"Because this is a long-form story," says the creator, "that we want to be able to tell for years and years and years." **F**

## AND NEXT... NEGAN?

Possibly the most popular villain to appear in Robert Kirkman's *Walking Dead* comic is Negan, the brutal leader of the Saviors and a power-mad reflection of Rick. The villain first appeared in last summer's landmark issue 100, in a scene that few who've read it will forget.

"When I'm writing the comic now, I'm thinking 'Oh man, it'd be really cool to see Negan on screen. It's going to be really great when we get to this,'" says Kirkman.

But there are no current plans to introduce Negan on the show, due in part to his trademark profanity-laden speech.

"There are things you can see on TV," explains Scott Gimple. "With Negan, absolutely we want to tell the story but we cannot show

Negan as Negan is in the comic. Believe me, I'm glad we have some time until we get to him. Because I really want to crack how exactly you represent Negan without the F-word."

"Because it is literally every other word," says Kirkman of the antagonist.

"We have a little while to think about that," says Gimple, who laughs at Kirkman's suggestion that they mask his profanity with zombie snarls.

"Yeah... Absolutely, of course!" laughs the showrunner. "I read stuff in the book. I read the Carl and Negan issue and I'm like, 'Oh my God, I can't wait to do that!'"

"But we got a lot to do," he says of the road ahead.



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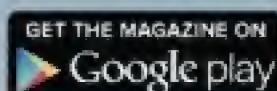
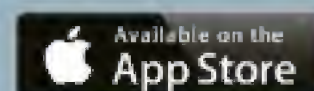
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# X FILES

Grab your torch and don your raincoat, as **Will Salmon** examines *The X-Files*' zombie episode...

It's perhaps a little surprising that, despite running for nine seasons, 202 episodes and two films, *The X-Files* only produced one bona fide zombie story (the second season dabbled with voodoo in "Fresh Bones", but that was a very low-key affair). It was a late entry too, coming in the series' seventh season. The zombies didn't even get top billing! As a crossover with sister show, *Millennium*, that honour went to Lance Henriksen, reprising his character Frank Black.

This episode – also titled "Millennium" – wasn't the first planned zombie story on the show. The production team reportedly met with George Romero and Stephen King, in the hope that they would collaborate on an episode for season seven. King (who had penned season five's "Chinga") had expressed an interest in remaking *Night Of The Living Dead* for the series, and Romero himself was potentially in line to direct it. Alas, it wasn't to be. Still, the idea of using zombies stuck...

Scripted by Vince Gilligan (now known for everyone's current best-show-ever, *Breaking Bad*), it begins with Mulder and Scully investigating a spate of grave-robbings, all linked to the mysterious Millennium group. They call on the help of former FBI investigator, Frank Black, now holed up in an asylum after the disastrous events in his own TV show (in short: murder, conspiracy, apocalyptic virus, dead wife). The trio do find the missing bodies – but returned to life as shambling zombies.



Well hello there. No Duchovny.

Even though *The X-Files* and *Millennium* had crossed over before (albeit obliquely, in *Millennium*'s "Jose Chung's Doomsday Defense", plus a few stray references elsewhere), they don't feel like shows that sit comfortably in the same universe. Where season one of *Millennium* is a (reasonably) grounded serial killer thriller, by the end of its second year, it's become larger in scale,

with a deadly viral outbreak in America that's suspiciously never mentioned on *The X-Files*. That storyline is quickly wrapped up in *Millennium*'s third season. Still, you'd think Mulder and Scully might have taken an interest!

But then, logic never was a strong-point with *The X-Files* and the clear point here is to give Lance Henriksen one last crack at Frank Black – and deservedly so. He brings a wonderful warmth and weariness to the role, and more humanity than Mulder and Scully's occasionally distant pop icons. Alas, Henriksen has since admitted that he's not fond of the episode, saying that "it's a reasonable *X-File* but it's not *Millennium*." It's hard to disagree.

At least the zombies themselves are impressive. As Gilligan said, "It wasn't about the plot as much as getting [Mulder and Black] down in the basement of this creepy old house with these zombies climbing up out of the ground." There's the ghost of that aborted *Living Dead* remake in Mulder's line, "Shoot them in the head, it seems to stop them." The episode loses points though for making Scully more than usually credulous. Okay, by this point she's no longer an arch sceptic, but she barely blinks at the existence of zombies.

Still, for all the episode's flaws, *The X-Files* was rarely less than entertaining, and this is, at least, free from all of that business with the bees. As a mini zombie-movie, it's moderately successful. And it contains one final treat for fans of the series. Amid the millennium party celebrations, Mulder and Scully share their first kiss.



The hospital was so firing from a serious shortage of wound dressings.





# YUP, THESE TOTALLY COUNT...

Is it or isn't it? **Calum Waddell** and **Will Salmon** are here to alert you to a few examples of walking corpse-carnage you may have forgotten about...

## DAWN OF THE MUMMY

1981 **Director:** Frank Agrama **Rating:** ★★★★★

This Egyptian-made monster-mash was a familiar face on the shelves of many a VHS rental shop before the "video nasty" purge cursed it as contraband. Finally re-released in the UK on DVD a few years back, this muddily-photographed fright-flick introduces us to some photographers who awaken an ancient curse – unleashing the titular terror and his zombie slaves. Indeed, there's plenty of living dead lunacy in this cheap but cheerful cheese-fest – which more or less recycles the plot of Lucio Fulci's classic *Zombie Flesh Eaters*, including a similarly fiery finale and even a few lookalike make-up jobs. On the plus side, the locations are fantastic – with the pyramids and Cairo adding an exotic placement to the surrounding plasma-spillage. The film ends with a set-up for a sequel but, unfortunately, a *Dawn of the Mummy II* is currently looking less likely than ever...



Even zombies like to keep their lunch foil-wrapped.

## MANIAC COP 2

1990 **Director:** Bill Lustig **Rating:** ★★★★★

In 1988's *Maniac Cop*, Matt Cordell, a policeman who was believed murdered, is found roaming the streets of New York, slaughtering anyone who happens to get in his way. Impaled and "drowned" at the end of the first film, director Bill Lustig indicated a second chapter could be considered by closing with a shot of Cordell's hand rising from the depths. Consequently, in this fast-paced follow-up, the super-powered police officer is back in action – and his resurrection has made him practically unkillable. The movie's most memorable moment involves the "Maniac" grabbing a chainsaw with his bare hands and grinding it to a halt (and he also gets to destroy co-star Bruce Campbell, himself no stranger to battling ghouls-from-beyond-the-grave). Naturally, another instalment was soon on the drawing boards, but 1993's mundane *Maniac Cop 3: Badge of Silence* should probably have stayed behind bars.



We're not sure, but something screams to have upped him.



## PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN

2003 **Director:** Gore Verbinski **Rating:**★★★★★

"What?!" We hear you splutter. "Pirates?!" But whatever else you might make of *The Curse Of The Black Pearl*, it absolutely is a zombie flick. The plot follows Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) and co battling a band of undead scallywags led by Geoffrey Rush's Captain Barbossa. Sure, they're not quite shambling zombies, looking human for the most part, but in the moonlight their true form is revealed. Plotwise, the film's a load of old toot, but fairly entertaining toot. It's easy to forget now that the series is a global smash, but *Pirates* was considered a gamble at the time, with Depp's outrageous performance a cause for concern among executives at Disney. Still, it paid off – the \$140m blockbuster earned a worldwide gross of nearly \$655m and spawned three (increasingly wearisome) sequels.



Image: © Disney Enterprises, Inc.

## BLACK DEMONS

1991 **Director:** Umberto Lenzi **Rating:**★★★★★

When Lamberto Bava directed *Demons* in 1985, its success was widely seen as the last great gasp of the Italian horror film. With budgets shrinking, the genre that made Dario Argento and Lucio Fulci icons of contemporary carnage was on its last legs. *Demons* itself may or may not be considered kosher insofar as zombie cinema goes, with the beasts rising from the cinema screen rather than graves. Regardless, it was a huge hit and led to this cash-in from Cannibal Ferox's Umberto Lenzi. Shot on location in Brazil, this inane oddity has South American voodoo practitioners launching an army of "black" zombies (definitely not demons – they rise from underneath the earth) on a group of badly-dubbed tourists, who end up trapped and tormented in an old mansion. Unlike the Fulci flesh-eaters, this lot have a habit of prodding out their victims' eyes with hooks. Lovely.



## A CHINESE GHOST STORY

1987 **Director:** Ching Siu-Tung **Rating:**★★★★★

Ghostly it might certainly be, but there is no denying that those rotten corpses – who are resurrected to spook rogue tax collector Leslie Cheung in this Hong Kong fantasy classic – are absolute, definite, bona fide zombies. Emanating from the golden age of Cantonese cinema, *A Chinese Ghost Story* begins much like *The Evil Dead*, complete with hyperkinetic cinematography, before weaving a mystical malevolence of its very own. The film's international success lead to two sequels, a 2011 remake and a softcore porn spin-off series ("wittily" dubbed *Erotic Ghost Story*), but this original classic throws everything plus the proverbial kitchen sink at the screen – including kung-fu craziness, a demonic tree-monster and a mystical maiden, played by the gorgeous Joey Wang. It all adds up to an essential bout of Oriental esotericism.



## LIFEFORCE

1985 **Director:** Tobe Hooper **Rating:**★★★★★

Based on the novel *Space Vampires* by British author Colin Wilson, and intended for release under that title until the top brass at distributor Tri-Star Pictures had other ideas, this might seem like a straightforward case of big screen, bloodsucking mayhem, until *Lifeforce* unleashes a horde of zombies across London. Why? Well, why not? This absolutely barmy sci-furce, from *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*'s Tobe Hooper, spins a surreal story about a naked female alien who comes to Earth intent on some extraterrestrial evil. She body-swaps her way around Britain's capital and, for reasons that are given very little logical explanation, come the final reel London is suddenly overrun with the living dead. Regardless of such random silliness, *Lifeforce* is a fantastic Freudian gender-bending epic that, to exhaust an old but perfectly apt quote, really has to be seen to be believed.







# List

We've celebrated the best zombie movies – but what about the worst? Our writers and interviewees pick their least favourites...

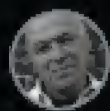


## ZOMBIE AFTERMATH

picked by Will Salmon

My introduction to horror movies was the age-old teenage tradition of going round my mates' houses to drink beer, eat pizza and watch movies. That's how I saw most of the classics, and it's how I saw this diabolical offering...

*Zombie Aftermath* (sometimes simply *The Aftermath*) is a 1982 effort by writer/director Steve Barkett. Two astronauts return to Earth, only to find it devastated by nuclear war, leaving only biker gangs and mutant zombies. It's dull, dumb and – in one truly perplexing sequence – features a child freaking out because someone has shot his favourite pan. No, really.



## ZOMBIE HOLOCAUST

picked by Simon Clark

This film is terrible in a fun, entertaining way. The scene where the character played by the always-superb Ian McCulloch [Dr Peter Chandler] uses a boat's outboard motor to shred a zombie's face is pure zombie-horror gold.



## HOUSE OF THE DEAD

picked by Alexander Gordon Smith

I enjoy low-budget zombie flicks, especially the ones where you can see the enthusiasm of the cast and crew. Horror filmmakers often start out by going down the zombie route – my first short was a zombie movie – and although they don't always make great films, they make enjoyable ones because they love the genre and they're having fun. What I can't stand is when a filmmaker or studio cynically decides to make a zombie movie just to jump on

a popular bandwagon. And I think there are few movies worse than Uwe Boll's *House Of The Dead*. This movie is rotten, inside and out. And not in a good way...



## SURVIVAL OF THE DEAD

picked by Calum Waddell

I know I should be picking a flop Jess Franco, such as *Oasis Of The Zombies*. On another day ask me about my feelings towards the gun fetishism of Zack Snyder's ridiculously over-praised *Dawn Of The Dead* rehash. But no. My reason for choosing *Survival Of The Dead* is because it was a new Romero film. You couldn't help but be excited! But "jeey-zus" (to quote the Canadian actors pretending to be Irish) it was terrible. Romero, the progressive, political genre-maker of such lefty, liberal cinema as *Night Of The Living Dead*, *Martin* and *Dawn and Day Of The Dead*, appeared to have been replaced by a hack-jobber seeking to comment on the "crack in Ireland" from the point of view of someone who hasn't the slightest idea what he is speaking about.

George – we love you, you're a shining light of splatter movie irony, wit and intelligence... but please, stay away from the zombies for the foreseeable future.



## FLESHEATER

picked by Cavan Scott

Also known as *Zombie Nash* and *Revenge Of The Living Zombies*, *Flesh Eater* was a 1988 low-budget travesty written, directed and starring Bill Hinzman. Who? Well, you'd probably know Bill better as the cemetery ghoul in Romero's seminal *Night Of The Living Dead* – you know, the one who wanted to eat Barbra?

Originally the film's assistant cameraman, Romero asked Hinzman to play *Night's* first zombie due to his gaunt features. Twenty years later, Hinzman recreated his shuffling role in this shambles of a film. Cue dodgy gore, appalling dialogue and girls seemingly unable to keep their clothes on. An embarrassing vanity project by a man desperate to relive his fifteen minutes of fame only to tarnish it.



## RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD II

picked by David Towsey

I remember seeing *Return Of The Living Dead II* as a teenager at a sleepover. I thought it was just awful – I didn't get why my friends were laughing. Zombies were supposed to be scary. That kind of so-bad-it's-funny horror is beyond me.



## NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD: 30TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

picked by Miles Hamer

Take, say, the Mona Lisa. Now, imagine someone has daubed on a Hitler moustache. Add a dick for good measure. Then set fire to it. You're now approaching the level of cultural vandalism this film commits. See, it's not the worst zombie film ever – just the complete defacement of a classic.

This miserable mess dares to splice in newly-filmed scenes that are so belief-shatteringly amateur, your eyes may just implode in astonishment. At least when George Lucas did it, he threw a bit of money at the screen. For all the good this woefully-acted BACKSTORY FOR THE GOD-DAMNED CEMETERY GHOUL does, it might as well be cutting to footage of a slowly-revolving hard in a microwave. And just minutes in, you'll wish it did.





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